■ News / A7

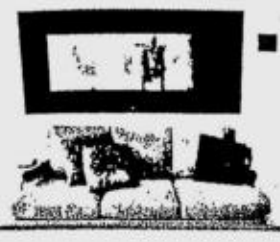
Starlet dies in car crash in Camarines Sur

■ Across / A17

NPAs own ambush of Mindoro solon

■ News/ A7

Indon police probe death of Sandra Burton



■ Lifestyle / E1

Order and harmony atop the city

■ News / A3

Second Fil-Am in 'American Idol' finals

Kuratong case back to SC; Lacson cries harassment

By Philip C. Tubeza and Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENTIAL candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson accused Malacañang of harassing him after the Office of the Solicitor General yesterday asked the Supreme Court to reverse a decision of Quezon City Judge Ma. Theresa Yadao dismissing the Kuratong Baleleng case

KURATONG/ A20

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tanong ng Bayan

Youth voters: Anong hanap nyo sa mga kandidato?

/ A5

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Friday, March 5, 2004 ★★ 56 pages / 6 sections / vol. 19 / no. 88 P18

website: www.inq7.net

FPJ croons 'All the Way' in Leyte sortie

By Christine O. Avendaño

TACLOBAN CITY—Fresh from his legal victory, Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday returned to the campaign trail singing and urging unity "for all" and an end to what he called dirty tricks.

The standard-bearer of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino kicked off a three-day sortie in Leyte and Samar wearing his trademark sunglasses and blue jeans.

"Tama na ang mga kalokohan (Enough of the dirty tricks)," he told reporters shortly after arriving in this city with the KNP ticket. *"Kahit anung mangyari, kung sinong manalo, tama na ang hidwaan, magkaisa at magtulungan tayo* (Whatever happens, whoever wins, enough with the conflict, let's unite and help one another)."

Told that KNP senatorial candidate Ernesto Maceda had earlier called for all presidential

FPJ/ A10

EDWIN BACASMAS

THE MAN of few words faces the media in Tacloban on Thursday. The question is: Will the nation endure the sound of silence during a Poe presidency? But for now, flushed with his legal victory, Fernando Poe Jr. pleads for unity.

POE CITIZENSHIP

Lawyer 'utterly failed' to prove case, says SC

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE DISQUALIFICATION case against Fernando Poe Jr. was thrown out because petitioner Victorino Fornier failed to prove his contention that the actor was not a natural-born Filipino, the Supreme Court said in its 53-page ruling issued Wednesday.

The high court said Fornier "utterly failed" to substantiate his case "notwithstanding the ample opportunity given to the parties to present their position and evidence, and to prove whether or not there has been material misrepresentation."

The high court said Poe was a natural-born Filipino because the 1935 Constitution stated that those with a Filipino father were also Filipinos.

It said Poe's father, Allan F. Poe, was also a Filipino because the latter's father, Spanish subject Lorenzo Pou, benefited from the "en masse Filipinization" when the Philippine Bill of 1902 took effect.

"While the totality of the evidence may not establish conclusively that respondent FPJ is a natural-born citizen of the Philippines, the evidence on hand still would preponderate in his favor enough to hold that he cannot be held guilty of having made a material misrepresentation in his certificate of candidacy," the high court said.

It added that "any conclusion" on material misrepresentation "must not only be material, but also deliberate and willful."

LAWYER/ A10

Poe dared: Face foes now

'With citizenship issue settled, now the real battle begins'

By Michael Lim Ubac

WITH THE disqualification case against him out of the way, actor Fernando Poe Jr. should now face his rivals in a public debate.

Raul Roco, standard-bearer of Alyansa ng Pag-asa, renewed the call for Poe to join a televised debate a day after the Supreme Court ruled that the actor was a natural-born Filipino citizen and thus qualified to run for president.

"Now that the technicalities are set aside, now that we know Fernando Poe has the technical qualifications to run, the Filipino people must now ask if he is qualified to be president," Roco told students of the Notre Dame University in Koronadal City yesterday.

Hours before the high court handed down the ruling, former newsman Rod Reyes, Poe's media bureau chief, said the actor "was not inclined to participate in a debate." But Reyes said he would coax the actor to join the face-off.

Poe, a high school dropout, had said that a "debate is pure talk and nothing is being accomplished."

To enable the candidates to present their platforms of government and to help voters make an informed choice, the Commission on Elections has authorized two presidential debates—one organized by the GMA Network and the INQUIRER and the other by the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting. The organizers and the Comelec are hoping that Poe will change his mind.

Short of saying that she will take part in a debate, President Macapagal-Arroyo is now raring for a battle of platforms with Poe.

"We are glad that this is over and we look forward to a principled and informative campaign,"

POE DARED/ A10

MUTE witnesses to tragedy: Pieces of luggage tell the stories of their owners but what belongs to whom? Relatives try to identify the recovered belongings of the passengers of SuperFerry 14 at Coast Guard headquarters along Roxas Boulevard.

BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

IN MEMORIAM
Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte condoles with the Formentera family during the first anniversary of the bombing of the Davao international airport on March 4, 2003 where 22 people were killed and 145 injured. *(Related story on Page A4.)*

DOTC rules out sabotage in SuperFerry 14 fire

By Clarissa S. Batino and Leila B. Salaverria

THE TRANSPORTATION department yesterday ruled out terrorism or sabotage as the cause of the fire that gutted SuperFerry 14, as search teams recovered six more bodies from the ill-fated ship in Sisiman Bay in Mariveles, Bataan.

A total of 10 bodies have been accounted for so far since the SuperFerry 14 caught fire on Manila Bay last Friday with 899 passengers and crew.

The bodies of one male and four female adults were recovered yesterday from the A-deck, which housed the tourist and cabin areas. The sixth body, however, was dismembered and could not be identified as a male or female, according to Philippine Coast (PCG) Guard Commandant Vice Adm. Arthur Gosingan.

Two of the bodies were recovered from the submerged portion of the half-sunken ferry and four were found in the dry portion that was covered with debris, Gosingan said.

DOTC RULES OUT/ A20

Gov't pushes peace pacts in 500 hot spots

By Christian Esguerra

THE GOVERNMENT is planning to initiate peace covenants between warring political factions in at least 500 areas tagged as hot spots to prevent further bloodshed as the May 10 elections draw near.

Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. said religious leaders with the support of police officers would broker peace covenants between political rivals to prevent violence.

"The DILG (Department of Interior and Local Government) will play second-fiddle because some candidates might accuse it of partisanship," Lina told the INQUIRER. "Religious leaders will be the main actors."

Lina said the peace covenant

GOV'T PUSHES A20

Grandma gives birth to 2 grandchildren

DALLAS—A 52-year-old Texas woman has given birth to her own grandchildren—a pair of twin girls she bore as a surrogate mother for her daughter-in-law.

Marianne Thoms, of Levelland, Texas, was released from the hospital and returned home on Wednesday, three days after giving birth to the girls at Covenant Medical Center in the northwest Texas city of Lubbock.

"We were glad to get them into this

GRANDMA/ A20

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with rains. Mindanao will be mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/05/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

23 NPA guerrillas nabbed in Tagaytay

By Christian Esguerra and Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

AT LEAST 23 suspected communist New People's Army guerrillas were arrested during a raid by police and military intelligence agents on a rebel safehouse in Tagaytay City yesterday.

Senior Supt. Roberto Rosales, the Cavite police chief, said the team had gone to a house in Barangay Mendez Crossing at about 1 p.m. to serve arrest warrants on Domingo Alcantara and Antonio Calina who are facing murder charges in Balanga, Bataan.

Instead, the raiders stumbled on a group of people having "an indoctrination session" in the house, he said.

"Those arrested were supposedly ranking NPA officers. They were hardcore members. They were there to attend an important meeting," Rosales said in a phone interview.

In related developments, NPA rebels attacked an Army detachment yesterday, leaving a teenage girl and two guerrillas dead in Compostela province in southern Mindanao, the military said.

The rebels also claimed responsibility for an attack on Wednesday that slightly wounded Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato and three other people traveling in her convoy during election campaigning in Occidental Mindoro.

Sato was attacked because she refused to pay "revolutionary taxes," they said.

Considered the most serious threat to the country's security, the NPA recently stepped up fighting nationwide, staging nearly 100 attacks in the last two months despite a recent resumption of peace talks mediated by Norway.

Military spokesperson Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said the rebels have a history of launching a string of attacks when the March 29 anniversary of the NPA founding approaches.

The members of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces, the police provincial mobile group, and the Tagaytay police that raided the Tagaytay City safe house found no weapons, only subversive documents, Rosales said.

He said the suspects were believed to be members of the NPA in Cavite and Batangas. Eight were the subjects of several arrest warrants.

Two separate groups, however, came forward yesterday to claim that the 23 were members of their organizations.

Millet Morales, spokesperson of Kilusan Para Sa Pambansang Demokrasya, said those arrested were KPD members, not NPA rebels.

She said the group belonged to KPD-affiliated groups like Makabayan, Youth for National Democracy and Kaisa Ka.

A ranking leader of the Rebolusyonarong Hukbong Bayan on the other hand said those arrested were RHB members, not NPA.

Ka Ding said the 23 were "ranking RHB officials in charge of sensitive positions" in RHB units in Central Luzon, particularly in Bataan and Pampanga.

The RHB is a splinter group of the NPA, which had a falling-out with the main communist armed group in the late 1990s.

Ka Ding, a former NPA leader in Southern Tagalog, said one of those arrested was able to call him just before the group was brought to the Isafp headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo.

"I would like to [make it clear] that they are not NPA rebels but officials of the RHB. They were in the area to conduct an educational discussion. Their safety is our priority now," the leader said.

Taken to the Isafp headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo for questioning were Serafin Añonuevo, Robert Sanchez, Buenavente Milan, Danilo Calderon, Efren Andrade, Maximo Bacu, Eduardo dela Cruz, Harold Gadian, Jose Gonzales, Chester Amparo, Arnel Atienza, Ernesto Adriano, Jessie Enriquez, Vicente Albano, Cesario Cabasag, Veronica Derek, Lolita dela Cruz, Evangeline Gonzalez, Emely Fajardo, Victor Serano and Ma. Devina Muñoz.

ol. Maximo Caro, head of the Army's 36th Infantry Battalion, said about 80 to 100 NPA rebels attacked a military position near Diwalwal, Monkayo, Compostela as gold miners were preparing for work nearby. ***With a report from AP***

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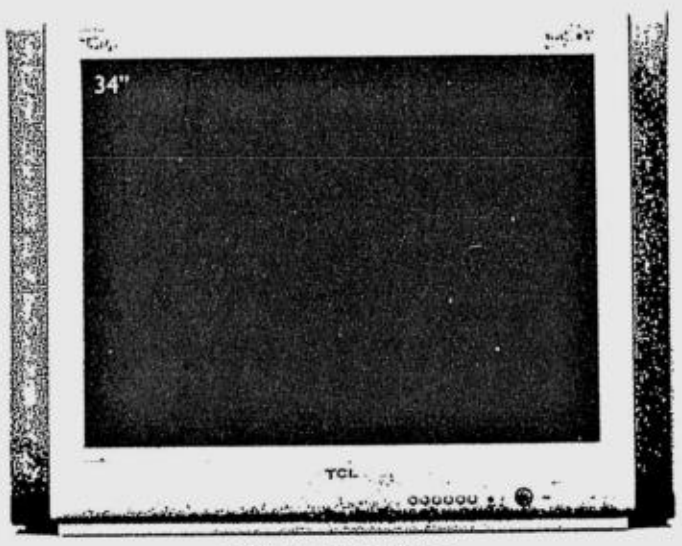

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Poe, KNP see funds pouring in

By Christine O. Avendaño

TACLOBAN CITY—With the citizenship issue behind him, Fernando Poe Jr. and the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) expect their backers to be more generous with their checkbooks.

Poe himself had acknowledged that contributions to the coalition's election campaign had been drying up.

"*Medyo kasi huminto ang gripo, ika nga,*" he told reporters yesterday. "*Pero sa ngayon sa tingin ko magkakaiba ng konti.* (The flow trickled off, so to speak. But now, I think it's a bit different)."

President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign spokesman, Mike Defensor, didn't buy the logic. He asserted donors would still not place their money on Poe because of his perceived lack of competence to run the government.

"The (campaign) funds will still not go to Mr. Poe because the business community will still go for continuity and experience," Defensor said. "They will go solidly for the President."

Defensor refused to say, when asked, if there was now a steady flow of campaign money to the President.

Political strategists have estimated Ms Macapagal would need anywhere from P5 to P10 billion to run a successful campaign. They estimate that Poe, with a huge mass base, would need at least P3 billion.

This is "piddling" compared to the election war chest of US President George W. Bush, who is reported to have piled up campaign donations exceeding $100 million even before the start of the campaign for the American presidential election in November.

Senatorial bet Ernesto Maceda said KNP backers held back on their contributions while the disqualification case against Poe was hanging at the Supreme Court, and the coalition had felt the crunch during the last few weeks.

Maceda cited his own experience, saying that his "traditional" supporters themselves had hesitated when forking over money.

When the high court ruled on Wednesday that Poe was a natural-born Filipino citizen and was eligible to run for president, Maceda said he received that same night a call from two supporters setting a meeting with him.

He believed the campaign contributors of "Raul Roco and company would now shift to FPJ."

"Now, if that happens... you can't insist on running if you don't have money to finance your TV commercials and gasoline for helicopters," he said.

Maceda asked presidential contenders to "get together behind the purpose of unseating" Ms Macapagal, saying their chances would be nil if their contributions dried up or they went down in the survey ratings. ***With Juliet Labog-Javellana***

It's Fornier brothers' turn in the hot seat

By Tarra Quismundo

IT'S the Fornier brothers' turn at the grill in the seemingly endless legal dispute spurred by actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s presidential bid.

Andresito and Victorino Fornier, both private lawyers, have been summoned to the Manila prosecutor's office to answer charges of falsification of public documents and use of falsified documents.

The brothers earlier filed a disqualification case against Poe, claiming that the actor was not a natural-born Filipino. In an en banc session on Wednesday, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Poe.

Oliver Lozano, a lawyer for church and women's groups and ex-counsel for former First Lady Imelda Marcos, filed the criminal case against the Forniers before the Manila court on Feb. 18.

In his complaint, Lozano alleged that the Forniers used fake documents in trying to prove that Fernando Poe Jr. was not a natural-born Filipino, and therefore could not run for president.

The preliminary investigation is set on March 12 and 18, before Assistant Prosecutor Gene Julianda. Julianda told the INQUIRER that she had sent subpoenas to the Forniers, instructing them to submit evidence against Lozano's allegations.

Not final?

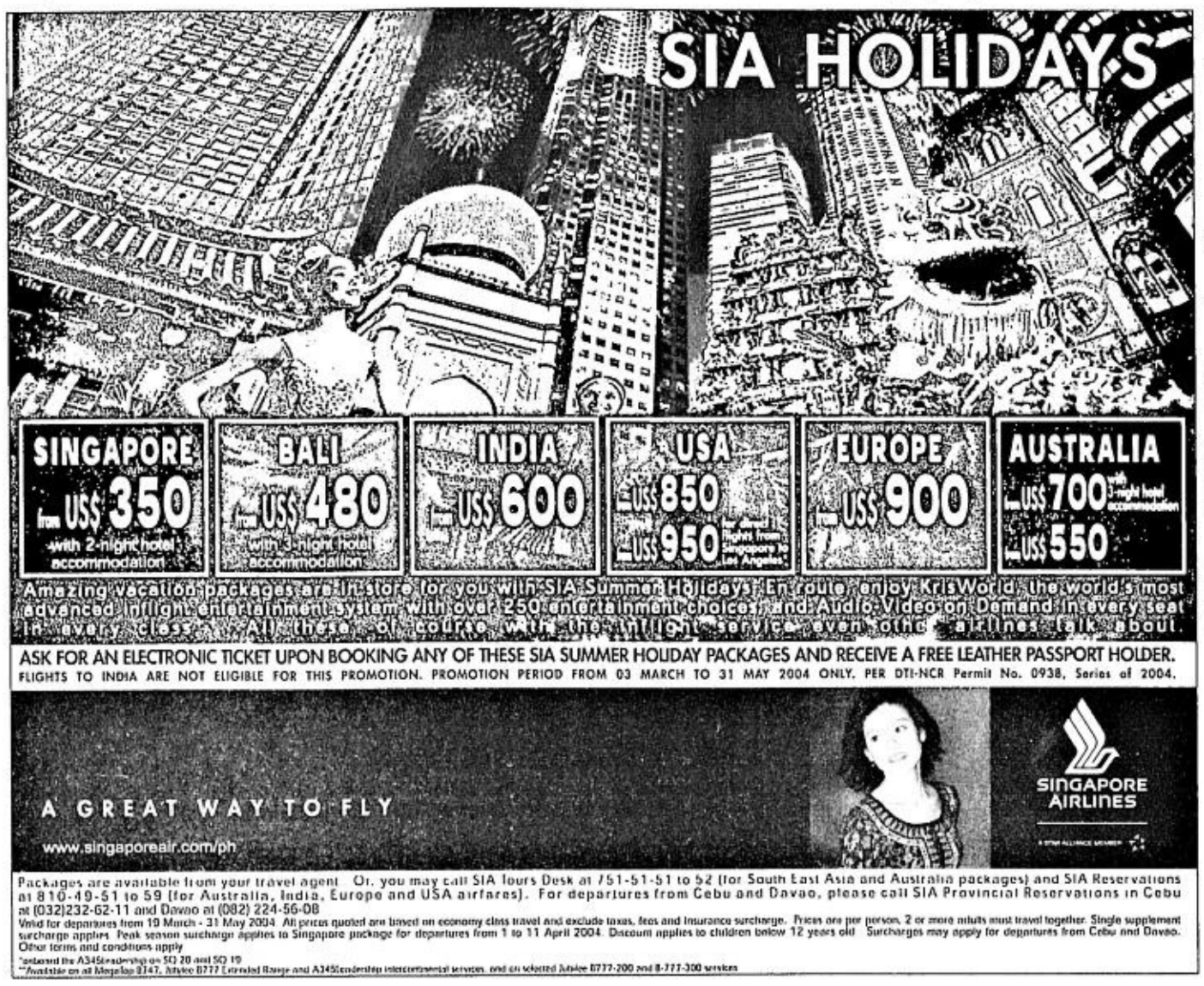
Even now that the Supreme Court has declared the actor a natural-born Filipino, the conflict seems far from over.

Lawyer Melanio Balayan, standing by his contention that Poe is not a qualified presidential candidate, said he was pursuing a parallel case.

Balayan, along with laywer Albert Villaseca and the non-government urban poor organization Akbay Maralita Sa Lungsod Silangan Townsite Reservation, Inc. filed criminal charges of perjury and falsification of public documents against Poe before the Manila prosecutor's office on Jan. 15, 2004.

"The Supreme Court ruling is not final," Balayan said. He explained that Victorino Fornier was set to file a motion for reconsideration before the high tribunal. Until this petition was decided, he said, the criminal case would proceed.

Elseray Faith Noro, investigating Manila prosecutor, said the suit of Balayan's group was being treated separately: "The Supreme Court ruled on a disqualification. (This) is a criminal case."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Pag-asa men meet to 're-energize' Roco campaign

By TJ Burgonio

POLITICAL advisers of presidential candidate Raul Roco met on Wednesday night to devise new strategies to "re-energize" the Roco campaign after the Supreme Court voted to dismiss a disqualification petition against opposition standard bearer Fernando Poe Jr.

With Roco coming in third in recent vote preference surveys, his strategists at the Alyansa ng Pag-asa is banking on the "undecided voters" to turn the tide in their candidate's favor.

Jaime Galvez-Tan, Roco's political adviser, said he met with leaders from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao to draw up new strategies to "reinvent" the Roco campaign "based on recent developments."

"I called our troops to review our performance during the 20 days of work, how we fared, how we are moving and if we are moving," Tan said in an interview.

"You'll be seeing a reinvention of campaign strategies in the coming days," he said.

Though he would not divulge their "tactical strategies," Tan said the Roco team has to step up its campaign in areas "where we can harvest votes." He did not elaborate.

Tan stressed that the new strategies were geared towards improving Roco's ratings in the surveys as well as capturing the "undecided and swing votes."

"We need to move out of our steady state," he said. Roco's ratings in surveys conducted by the Social Weather Stations, Pulse Asia Inc. and the Ibon Foundation have stayed at the 17 to 20 percent range.

Another Fil-Am makes it to finals of 'American Idol'

By Armin Adina

ANOTHER Filipina has wowed America.

Jasmine Trias, 17, has landed in the top 12 of "American Idol," the wildly popular talent search on television.

From the last group of eight semifinalists who competed last March 2, Trias was one of two voted to the final round via telephone and text entries from viewers all over the United States. She joins fellow Pinay Camile Velasco from Maui, Hawaii who competed in the second group of eight last Feb. 18.

There were a total of 32 semifinalists.

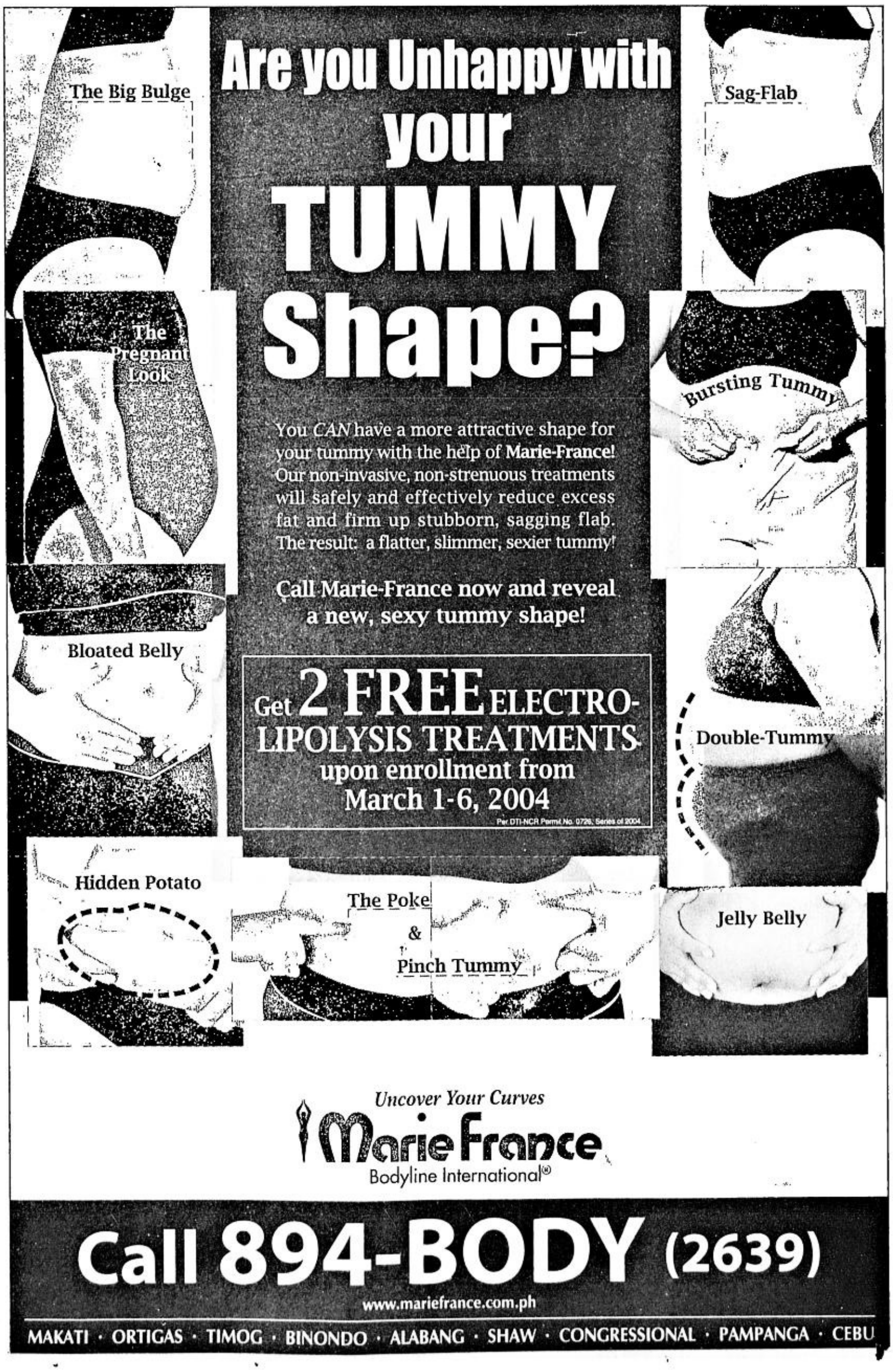
Despite being short, Trias won the audience's nod with her soulful rendition of Whitney Houston's "(I Want to) Run to You." She was accompanied to Hollywood, where the semifinals were held, by her parents, Rudy and Nora Trias, and siblings Ronel, 15, and Neolani, 6.

It was the first time that Jasmine was seen on the show. Her audition performance was not among those televised in the first few weeks of the show's current season.

"I love the sound of your voice. I really like you, I hope you move on," said Randy Jackson. Paula Abdul gushed: "You're such a pro!"

Added the sarcastic and much-feared Simon Cowell: "You are potentially a very good singer."

It was always easy to spot Trias among the contestants. She wore a faux flower on her right ear. "It's my Hawaii thing," she said. While Velasco was born here in the Philippines, Trias was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on Nov. 3, 1986.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1ST ANNIVERSARY YESTERDAY

Probers clear Reyes, Corpus in Davao ports bombings

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

FORMER Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and former military intelligence chief Victor Corpus yesterday were cleared of complicity in the bombing of the Sasa Wharf and the Davao International Airport by the presidential commission appointed to probe the twin blasts in April 2003.

The five-member commission led by Msgr. Pedro Maniwang, assistant parish priest of the Sta. Ana Parish Shrine in Davao City, said there was no evidence to prove the allegations made by rebel junior officers that Reyes and Corpus were behind the April 2 and 3 bombings in Davao City.

The charges of the mutinous officers, who called themselves the Magdalo group that mounted the July 27, 2003 failed coup, led to the resignation of Corpus and Reyes. Reyes has since been appointed head of the anti-kidnapping campaign while Corpus is now chief of the Civil Relations Service of the Armed Forces.

After 5 months

The Maniwang Commission submitted its report to President Macapagal-Arroyo more than five months after it was created on Sept. 18, 2003 to investigate the Magdalo charges.

It said there was also no evidence that either the military or the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front was behind the bombings.

It also said the Oplan Greenbase documents that the rebel officers had claimed detailed an alleged government plan to bomb mosques and pin the blame on the MILF were fake.

The commission said there was no reliable evidence to prove the claim of Capt. Milo Maestrecampo that he had been ordered by his military superiors to bomb mosques in Davao.

Admonition

But the commission admonished top defense and military officials for not making any credible effort to "discredit" Oplan Greenbase.

"The commission is disturbed by the failure of the top leaders of the defense establishment to openly and vigorously discredit the Oplan Greenbase documents as spurious and to impose sanctions on its authors as well as its purveyors," Maniwang said in a briefing in Malacañang yesterday.

He said the defense department took "feeble steps" to deny the authenticity of the documents.

The commission also found disturbing the Philippine National Police's "anemic response" and lack of zeal in investigating the bombings, which mainly victimized minority Muslims, and the lapses in the police investigation.

It said this could be dangerous as "it may suggest to some that members of the cultural minority can be dealt with harshly [and] with impunity."

"The commission believes that the lapses in the investigation of the bombing incidents fueled the public suspicion that there was a deliberate attempt to cover up the complicity of the government in the violence that took place. For how can one ignore the obvious blunder committed by the police investigators when they contaminated the bomb site, the loss of what little evidence they had gathered therefrom and the ability of the forensic experts to determine the kind of explosives used," Maniwang said.

He said the commission was not convinced that Muntazer Sudang was the Davao airport bomber and deplored the haste with which Muntazer was charged as prime suspect.

Maniwang said the the commission had to rely on the testimony given by the rebel soldiers to the Feliciano Commission which investigated the failed July 2003 failed coup as they refused to testify before it.

A year after the explosions that killed 22 people and injured more than 100 others, security remains tight in Davao City.

But though the grim images remain in people's minds, it has not prevented city residents from going about their daily routine.

Malls and shopping centers are full and people's fear of terrorist attacks appears to have disappeared. *With a report from Anthony S. Allada and Bing Gonzales, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

UNFORGETTABLE. Danilo Alquirez, still recuperating from fractures sustained during the Davao airport bomb attack last year, lights a candle at the site. A cab driver, Alquirez was waiting for passengers just a few meters away when the explosion occurred, killing 22 and injuring 145. BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

Hold 'austere' rites, grads told

ELEMENTARY and high schools have been told to hold "austere" graduation rites this year in line with the government's austerity program.

The order issued by Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus also laid down the theme for this year's graduation: "Education for a Strong Republic: Laying a Solid Foundation."

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is seeking a full term in next May's election, has set down the building of a "strong republic" as the goal of her administration.

It has been described as a strategy to strengthen the Philippine Republic by building up its institutions and making it independent of narrow class and sectoral interests.

In his Order 11 dated Feb. 23, De Jesus warned school officials against collecting fees or any kind of contribution for the graduation ceremonies.

"Non-academic projects" are not a requirement for graduation, the education secretary said.

"No extravagant special attire or extraordinary venue for the ceremonies should be required," he added.

Parents can be asked to make "voluntary contributions," but they must be told how their money is being spent, he said.

Teachers and principals are not to involve themselves in the collection of these contributions, De Jesus said.

Contributions to the annual yearbook should also be voluntary, he said.

In another department order last week, the DepEd relaxed the guidelines for choosing honor students, apparently to make sure that the slots for valedictorian and salutatorian are filled despite the stricter grading system imposed last October in public schools.

Many students are expected to have much lower grades, or even flunk in some subjects, as a result of the new grading system.

Under the new relaxed rules, De Jesus said the two students with the highest academic average should be proclaimed valedictorian and salutatorian, even if they obtain a grade of below 80 percent in any subject. *Dona Pazzibugan*

Business survey says corruption in RP worse

SINGAPORE is the least corrupt nation in Asia and Indonesia the worst, but most countries in the region have shown improvements in dealing with the problem—not including the Philippines, where corruption is seen to have worsened.

This was the result of the latest survey of foreign business executives by the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, released yesterday.

The study showed that conditions improved sharply in China and Thailand and only slightly in other countries, compared to the last poll in 2003.

Using a scale with zero the best possible grade and 10 the worst, PERC asked more than 1,000 expatriate businessmen and women in the region to rate corruption in their host countries.

Singapore emerged the least corrupt with a score of 0.5, although this was a slight deterioration from its grade of 0.38 last year. Japan was a distant second with 3.5, and Hong Kong came in third with a score of 3.6.

Taiwan placed fourth with a grade of 6.1 and South Korea followed with 6.67. China, Malaysia, and Thailand were tied at sixth place with scores of 7.33, trailed by the Philippines at 8.33 and Vietnam at 8.67.

India, with a score of 8.9, and Indonesia, with 9.25, were the worst performers.

For comparison, the survey included the United States, which got a grade of 2.45; and Australia, 2.17.

"Perceptions have improved in the majority of Asian countries covered by our survey conducted in January and February of this year," the risk consultancy said.

Indonesia's grade, although the worst this year, was an improvement from last year's 9.33. India's grade improved from last year's 9.3 and Vietnam's rating bettered its 8.83 score in 2003.

"The Philippines was the only country ranking near the bottom of the list where the problem of corruption is seen to have intensified in the past year," the report said. Manila's score worsened by 0.66 points.

Malaysia's grade also sharply deteriorated from 6.00 last year. But PERC clarified this was largely due to the willingness of the government under Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi to admit that the problem of corruption existed.

"It does not mean that corruption has actually increased this much in the past year," PERC said. "The latest grade is a correction of underestimates in earlier years."

The consultancy held Malaysia as an example of a country where the perception grade has worsened but the problem of corruption is being addressed more decisively. *AFP*

Very low price of onions making Ecija tillers cry

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CABANATUAN CITY—Far from the turnaround they were expecting after four years of frustration, onion farmers in Nueva Ecija have been devastated by the unusually low buying price for their produce this year.

In San Jose City, the buying price being offered by traders has gone down to P2 a kilo.

Even at a buying price of P5.70 per kilo, onion-growing would only be a break-even enterprise, according to agriculture department officials.

More distressing for onion farmers is the news that traders in certain areas of the city have stopped buying following reports that the onion bulbs had been affected by the unseasonal rains that came while the bulbs were about to be harvested.

Nueva Ecija accounts for more than 90 percent of the country's onion production.

Lack of facilities

In Bongabon, the Nueva Ecija town that is regarded as the country's onion capital, Mayor Francisco Guerrero said traders were offering P4 a kilo for the yellow onion (yellow granex) variety.

He said farmers who have harvested their onions have been forced to sell low as they do not have the facilities to store them.

"Our onion growers in Bongabon are despondent. They are forced to dispose of their produce at starvation price. Their long wait has been for naught," said Guerrero.

He said it takes at least five months, from seedling preparation to planting and harvesting, before onion farmers are able to reap the fruits of their labor.

During that time, farmers depend on loans from lenders to finance their production needs, he said.

Manipulative cartel?

Guerrero said an onion cartel could be manipulating the buying price for onions, noting how a big number of buyers suddenly appear at harvest time in the onion-growing areas already quoting a specific buying price.

He said that when there is a change in the buying price, traders immediately offer a uniform buying price.

These buyers are reportedly agents of businessmen based in Metro Manila.

Guerrero said the purchased onion bulbs are brought to several cold storage plants and are sold during the rainy season at very high prices.

He appealed to the government to do something before the onion-growing becomes a dying industry.

He said one solution would be to create an agency that will buy the produce of the onion farmers at a determined floor price and store these in storage facilities.

The government could then also help consumers by selling the onions at a later date at affordable prices.

September price

During September, the price of onion shoots up to P30 to P40 a kilo.

Greg Quiñones, high-value commercial crops coordinator in the Nueva Ecija agriculture office, said more than 11,000 hectares of farmland in the province were planted to onions this year.

Bongabon has the biggest area planted to onion at more than 2,800 hectares. San Jose City and Rizal town have more than 1,000 hectares each while Laur and Gabaldon towns account for more than 500 hectares each. The rest of the towns have less than 500 hectares each.

Quiñones said the cost of production inputs and labor per hectare reaches about P60,000 to P70,000. A yield of 14,000 kilos per hectare is considered good.

Announcement

In the past few years, 9,000 hectares were planted to onions in the province, the sudden increase in hectarage being traced to an announcement by President Macapagal-Arroyo that the illegal importation of onions had been checked.

In 2000, the government allowed the importation of onions because of inadequate domestic supply. Imported onions, which were sold at very low prices, flooded the market in succeeding years.

Some Department of Agriculture officials, the President told the Novo Ecijanos, were suspected to have connived with some businessmen involved in the illegal importation of onions.

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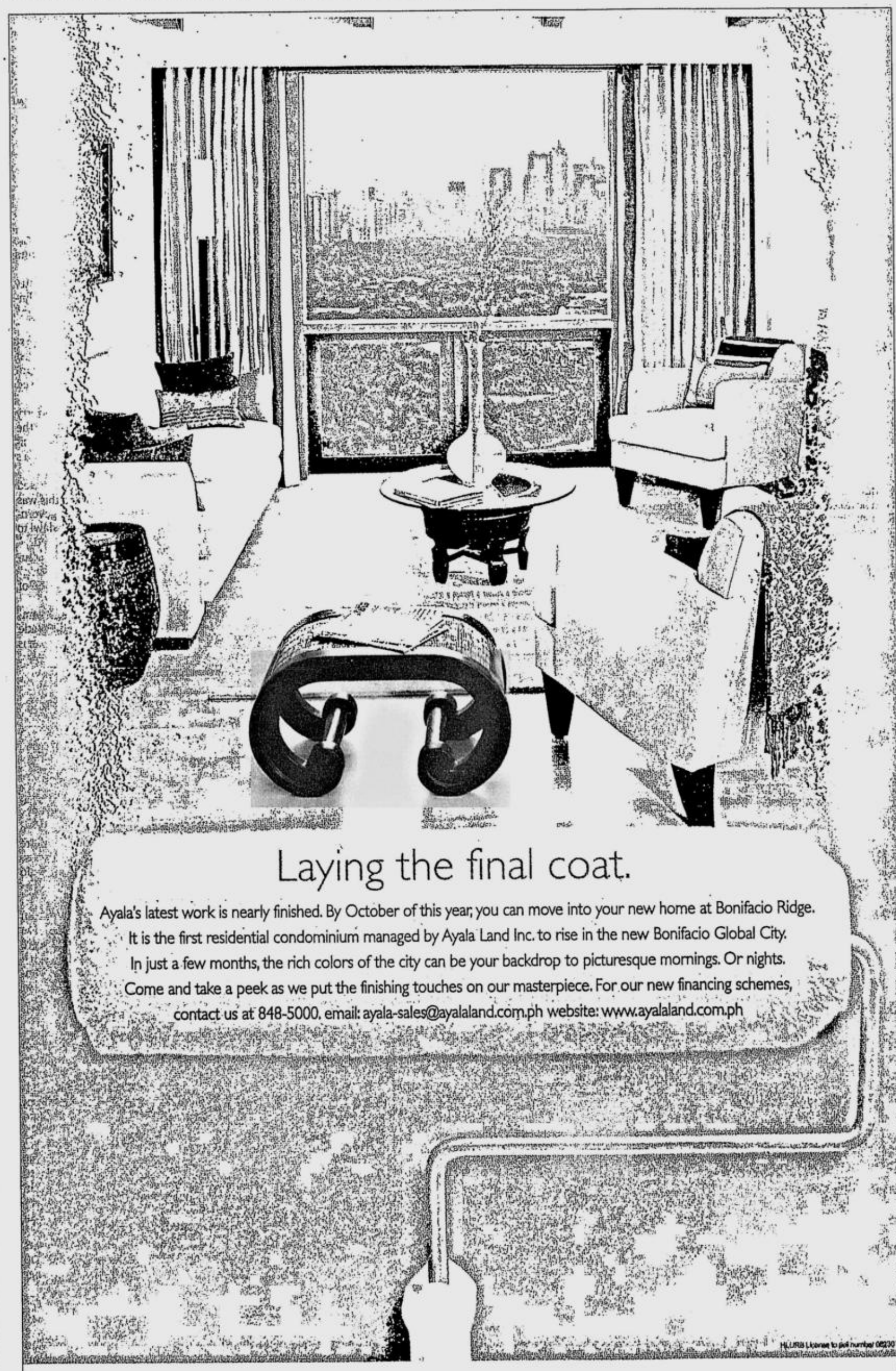

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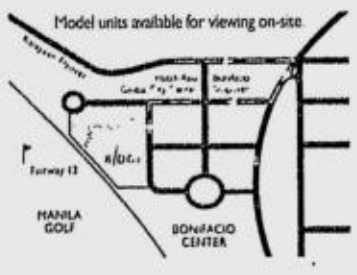

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Pinoys look to US for help in Haiti

So far, they are safe, including seamen who were hijacked

By Jerome Aning

NOT HAVING an embassy in Haiti, the Philippines has to ask for help from the United States to ensure the safety of about 100 Filipinos living in the strife-torn Caribbean island, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis said yesterday.

The US, which had sent peacekeeping troops to the capital of Port-au-Prince, could help evacuate the Filipinos if the security situation worsened, said Seguis.

The Philippine honorary consul in Haiti, Fitzgerald Oliver James Brandt, had reported that he was able to contact members of the Filipino community, Seguis said.

Border crossed

Some of the Filipinos in Haiti were able to cross the border into the neighboring Dominican Republic, he said.

"Thankfully, we have yet to receive reports of Filipinos being injured or being caught in the crossfire in Haiti," Seguis told reporters.

The Filipinos in Haiti work as domestic helpers and restaurant and hotel staff.

US President George W. Bush sent a contingent of more than 500 Marines to Haiti over the weekend to guard key facilities, such as the international airport and the presidential palace, and to protect and evacuate US citizens.

UN force

A United Nations-led international peacekeeping force will soon be dispatched to Haiti to provide security, a move that the Philippines fully supports, Seguis said.

In another development, Seguis said the seven Filipino crewmen of the M/V Margot, which fleeing Haitians hijacked on Feb. 26, were safe after the freighter was intercepted by the United States Coast Guard off Miami.

Some 22 Haitian nationals, disguised as government officials and policemen, had boarded the Margot and taken the crew hostage when it docked in Gonaives, Haiti's fourth largest city.

The hijackers then commanded the crew to take the ship to the US but it was intercepted the same day by the US Coast Guard 11 kms off the coast of Miami.

The acting DFA chief said the Philippine Embassy in Washington DC had been in touch with APQ Crew USA, the vessel's shipping agent in the US and its manning agent in the Philippines, APG Ship Management.

Discretion urged

APQ said all the Filipino crewmen were safe while the Haitians had been arrested.

"In the light of this incident, we would like to caution all Filipino seafarers to exercise discretion when traveling to or docking at ports of countries experiencing conflict," Seguis said.

Labor attaché Arturo Sodusta of the Philippine Embassy in Washington identified the Filipino crew members of the Margot as Juan Perico, Rey Pascua, Arturo Cuevas, Jose Vallejera, Edsel Rosales, Romualdo Anabe and Eliseo Pacaldo.

Among poorest

Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Monday fled into exile in the Central African Republic after a month-long revolt. The country is now under an interim government headed by Supreme Court Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Yvon Neptune has declared a state of emergency and announced the formation of a commission to oversee security.

Haiti, with a population of eight million, is one of the poorest countries in Central America. It occupies the western part of the small Caribbean island of Hispaniola, the other half of which is occupied by the Dominican Republic.

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Starlet killed in smashup

Camarines Sur crash also claims manager's life

SEXY starlet Halina Perez and her manager were killed and six others were injured when their van collided with a truck along the national highway early yesterday morning in Del Gallego town, Camarines Sur, police said.

Perez (real name: Vanessa Uri), 22, was pronounced dead on arrival by doctors at the Maria Eleazar District Hospital in the neighboring town of Tagkawayan in Quezon.

Her manager, Isaac Acosta Munio Jr., 45, died on the spot, according to Insp. Bernardo Arroyo, Del Gallego police chief.

Among those injured was another starlet, 18-year-old Dana Garcel (Beverly Suarez). MEDH's Dr. Benjamin Campomanes said she suffered a fracture in the left foot. Arroyo identified the five other casualties as Melon P. Antonio, 24, of Quezon City; Roger J. Laguyo, 28, a truck helper and native of Ilocos Norte; Gerry Olais; Domingo Vallejos and Renato C. Tambucol, drivers.

Photo shop opening

Police said Perez and her group were headed back to Manila from Legazpi City in a silver Nissan Serena. The starlet was a guest at the opening of a photo shop in Legazpi City on Wednesday.

Broken neck

Arroyo said the speeding van smashed into an approaching Isuzu trailer truck on Quirino Highway at around 6:30 a.m. in Barangay Cumaday-caday, three kilometers from Del Gallego town proper.

Perez broke her neck, causing her death, according to Campomanes. The doctor said Vallejos remained comatose, and Antonio and Olais had been transferred to the Lucena Doctors Hospital in Lucena City.

The other driver, Tambucol, sustained minor injuries in the head and was treated at a clinic in Del Gallego.

Tossed to other side

Garcel told radio dzBB yesterday morning that Vallejos was speeding on the zigzag road when their vehicle hit the truck. "I was seated on the left side of the vehicle, and every time the driver took a sharp turn, I was tossed to the other side," she said.

But in a phone interview, Tambucol blamed the accident on the truck driver, Larry Tevez who "swerved and took our lane."

Tevez, who suffered minor injuries, surrendered to the Del Gallego police.

In an interview, he said the truck was negotiating a steep climb when "we suddenly met the Nissan. I stepped on the brakes but it was too late. I lost control."

Pa gets body

Perez's body was claimed yesterday afternoon by her father and other family members. Her mother is arriving today from Hong Kong where she works as a domestic helper.

Employees of the starlet's Legazpi host, Konika Ely's Studio, recalled that Perez had seemed "distracted" during the previous day's events.

"The fans were all over her during the pictorials and the motorcade was very successful," said Ana Acuna, "but she looked very lonely, in low spirits." *Reports from Ronnie Lorejo and Gil Francis Arevalo of PDI Southern Luzon Bureau, and Marinel Cruz in Manila*

LOW SPIRITS. One of Halina's last photographs, taken during a motorcade in Legazpi City, where she was the toast of the town on Wednesday. Some spectators said she looked "lonely."

Burton death probed

JAKARTA, Indonesia—Police have opened a murder investigation into the death of veteran journalist Sandra Burton whose body was found in her Bali home last week, officials said Thursday.

Burton, 62, former Time magazine writer and bureau chief, died last Friday and police said their preliminary investigation indicated she may have been strangled.

Her friends, however, had earlier quoted Burton's live-in companion Robert Delfs as saying he and a houseboy had found her in the bathroom where it appeared she had fallen and hit her head.

"There are strong indications that Sandra Burton was strangled because we found strangling marks on her neck," said Denpasar Chief Detective Major Wawan Ridwan.

"However, we cannot confirm this until we have medical records from her private doctors in Singapore and also autopsy results from Sanglah Hospital," he added. *AP*

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US troops in Balikatan probed for drug use

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—A number of United States servicemen participating in the large-scale joint military training exercise here known as Balikatan-04 are being investigated for drug use, a Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency official said.

Supt. Jerome Baxinela, PDEA acting director in Central Luzon, said the probe began after the PDEA, the US Naval Criminal Investigative Services and the US Drug Enforcement Agency arrested at least 10 suspected drug pushers at Clark between Feb. 26 and March 2.

The agents allegedly recovered .01 gram of shabu [methamphetamine hydrochloride] and 17 grams of marijuana from the suspects.

Baxinela said the buy-bust operations were conducted after the USNCIS and USDEA received reports that the suspects were preying on American troops, selling them marijuana and shabu.

He said the investigation would aim to find out if the visiting US soldiers were using illegal drugs.

The report released by the PDEA regional office at Clark did not give details on how the pushers managed to get near the US troops. For the duration of the two-week war games, American forces were billeted in housing inside this former US military base.

The suspects, four of them women, are detained at the Angeles City jail just outside Clark.

Baxinela said they have been charged with violating Republic Act 9165, the law against the manufacture, sale and use of illegal narcotics.

In a report, he quoted officials of the US agencies as saying that the successful operations had "tremendously made an impact on the prevailing situation in the mentioned areas of operation (Clark and Subic)."

Baxinela said the PDEA would "continue to conduct anti-drug operations in the areas to sustain the gains of the recently concluded operations and create an atmosphere of safety for visiting foreigners like the Balikatan participants."

Meanwhile, the USS Blue Ridge, the flag ship of the US Seventh Fleet, made a brief visit to the Philippines on Wednesday where staff officials of the Japan-based command held talks with Filipino Navy officials, the US Embassy said Thursday.

The command-and-control ship dropped anchor off Luzon for a 12-hour call amid the ongoing RP-US joint military Balikatan exercise, an embassy statement said.

Fleet Commander Robert Willard received on board a Philippine Navy delegation led by Vice Admiral Ernesto de Leon.

"This was an opportunity for Seventh Fleet staff to meet with their counterparts in the Philippine Navy. These meetings are routine and improve our military inter-operability," said Commodore Dave Borah, Southeast Asia policy officer for the Seventh Fleet.

More than 2,000 US troops are taking part in two weeks of military exercises with Filipino forces. The war games end Sunday.

With an AFP report

The GSIS Scholarship Program

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) is now accepting applications from qualified incoming college students for the GSIS College Scholarship Program for SY 2004-2005.

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For more details, please visit the GSIS Main Office or your nearest GSIS Branch/ District Office or contact Emma, Nelda, Meljune and/or Marisa of the GSIS-HRDD Scholarship Staff at Tel. Nos. 551-1878 or 891-6161 locals 4862/4863.

Application deadline: 2 April 2004.

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Judge who granted murder suspect Ecleo bail explains

CEBU CITY—"No politician influenced me; not the President or Sen. Robert Barbers."

Judge Generosa Labra of Regional Trial Court Branch 23 yesterday broke her silence to debunk allegations she had succumbed to political pressure when she allowed murder suspect Ruben Ecleo Jr. to post bail.

Labra said she did not know that Ecleo, a popular cult leader, was running for mayor of San Jose town, on Dinagat Island, Surigao del Norte.

Labra said she planned to confront Ecleo and his lawyer about this today when she hears the prosecution motion to increase Ecleo's bail to P5 million from P1 million.

"What's the use of running when he [Ecleo] is really sick? Why would he burden himself with politics if he is ailing?" she said.

"There is a chance I may reconsider my decision. The main reason I granted him bail was because of his health condition. If he's not really that sick, *ma*-defeat *lang ang* purpose," Labra said.

Ecleo, "supreme master" of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association, is facing parricide charges in the death of his wife, Alona Bacolod, 27, on Jan. 5, 2002. Her body was found three days later in a garbage bag in Dalaguete, Cebu.

On Monday, Labra allowed Ecleo to post bail of P1 million for "humanitarian reasons," after she took into consideration his supposed worsening health condition in the city jail which has no medical facilities.

Ecleo has been confined at the Chong Hua Hospital since he complained of difficulty in breathing and severe chest pains.

About 60 members of Sanlakas and the Partido ng Manggagawa trooped to the Hall of Justice here on Wednesday to protest Labra's decision.

They said President Macapagal-Arroyo and Barbers may have influenced the judge. But Labra dismissed the allegations as "speculative" and "baseless."

She said she was willing to inhibit herself from the parricide case if the parties to it did not trust her. *Jolene R. Bulambot, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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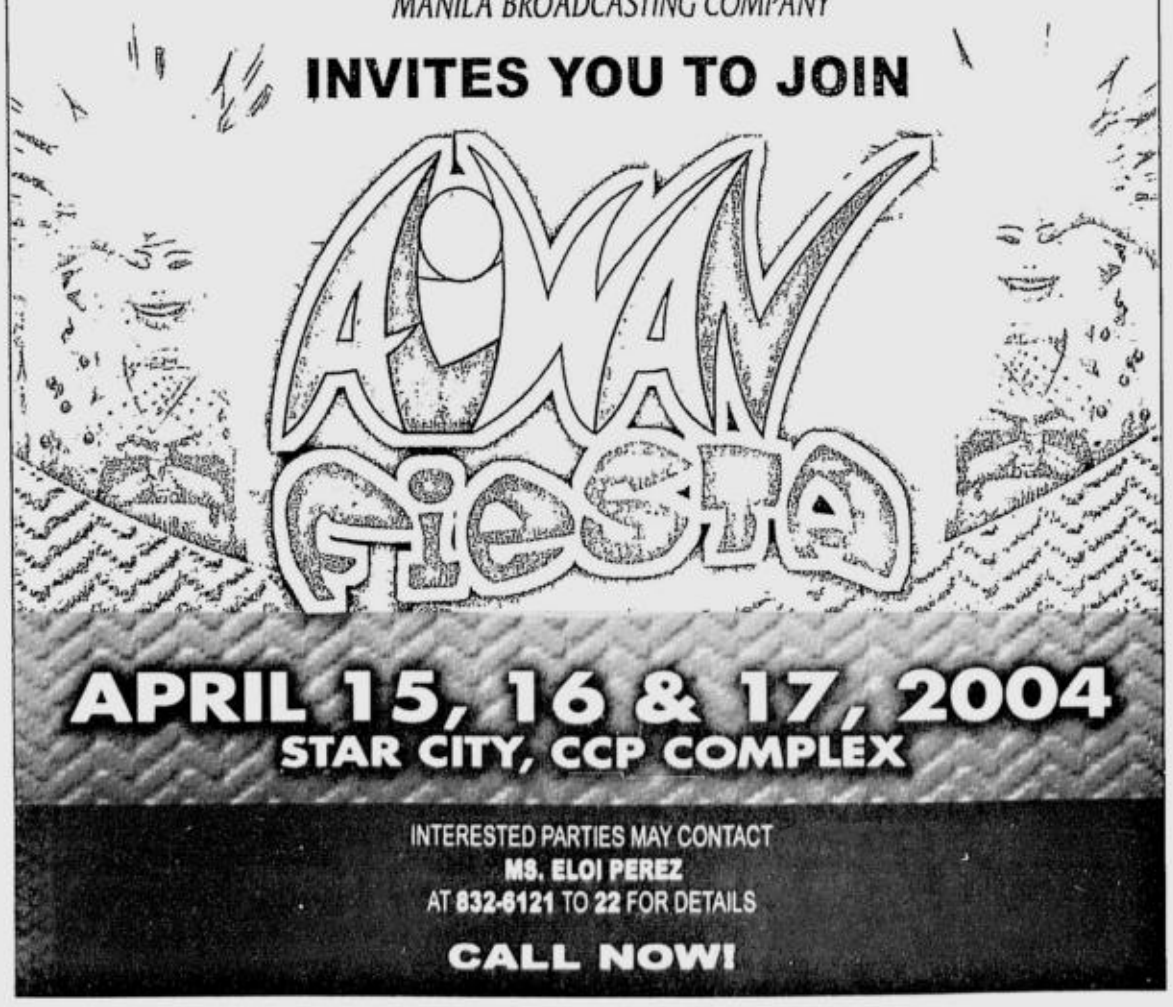

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, March 5, 2004
1st Week of Lent

1st Reading: Ezk 18:21-28
Gospel: Mt 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you, then, that if you are not righteous in a much broader way than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to our people in the past: Do not commit murder; anyone who does kill will have to face trial. But now I tell you: whoever gets angry with a brother or sister will have to face trial. Whoever insults a brother or sister deserves to be brought before the council; whoever calls a brother or a sister "Fool" deserves to be thrown into the fire of hell. So, if you are about to offer your gift at the altar and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with him, and then come back and offer your gift to God.

"Don't forget this: be reconciled with your opponent quickly when you are together on the way to court. Otherwise he will turn you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the police, who will put you in jail. There you will stay, until you have paid the last penny."

Commentary

The Pharisees were "the Separated." They had retreated to a narrow place and taken refuge there. That narrow place was the Law and its rigorous application to the details of daily life.

Against them, in today's reading, Jesus asserts the necessity of deep interiority: our actions ought to flow from the heart, the center of our being.

It is hard for us to occupy the whole space of our religion. We are able to make interiority in turn a narrow place. Perhaps this is the most common temptation today: to take refuge in an inner private world, ignoring the outer.

Buddhists take refuge in "the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha." That is, the Buddha, the teaching and the community. Adapting this to ourselves, we might say, "I take refuge in God, in Jesus (the Word) and in the Church."

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Anti-flu shots urged for poultry workers

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT of Health yesterday urged poultry companies to immunize their workers against human influenza, as a major drug company reduced the price of its flu vaccine by 37 percent especially for poultry workers.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said the country needed to be proactive in battling the avian flu which has killed at least 22 people in Asia and caused the culling of around 100 million chickens in the region.

The DOH has formed a technical working committee to map out the government's plan of action against the bird flu. The panel has identified the groups most at risk of exposure, including poultry workers, persons aged 60 years and over, and health workers.

Dayrit said that while there was no vaccine yet for avian flu, being immunized against human flu would ensure that the two sub-types of the influenza A virus would not combine and mutate into a more virulent strain, in case the bird flu virus entered the Philippines.

"This combination can be fatal so by shielding them [workers] from human flu, we also prevent emerging problems with bird flu," Dayrit said

"The public has access to the vaccine but poultry workers will be prioritized as they are the ones who are more potentially exposed to both human and avian flu," he added.

The drug company Aventis Pasteur, maker of the vaccine known by its generic name inactivated influenza split-virion, will offer the vaccine at P300 to poultry workers through their employers from March to November. The vaccine normally costs P475.

The vaccine is an injectable and would be available only in selected vaccine centers nationwide through the poultry workers' companies.

The Bureau of Animal Industry estimated that there are at least 20,000 poultry workers in the country, most of them working for big companies. This is one reason the bird flu virus would be more controllable in the Philippines if it entered the country, according to the World Health Organization.

WHO representative to the Philippines Jean Marc Olive said that unlike the Philippines, poultry farming in China and its neighbors is mostly backyard, making it very difficult to control an epidemic.

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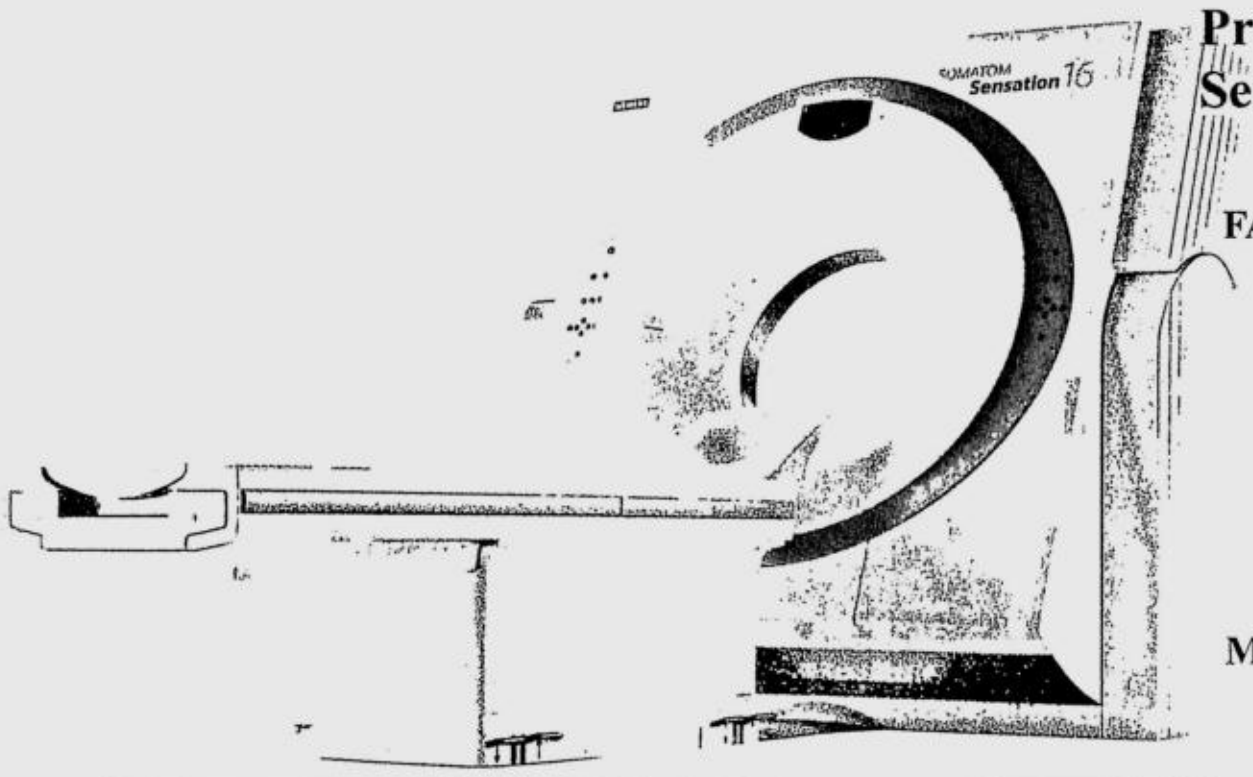

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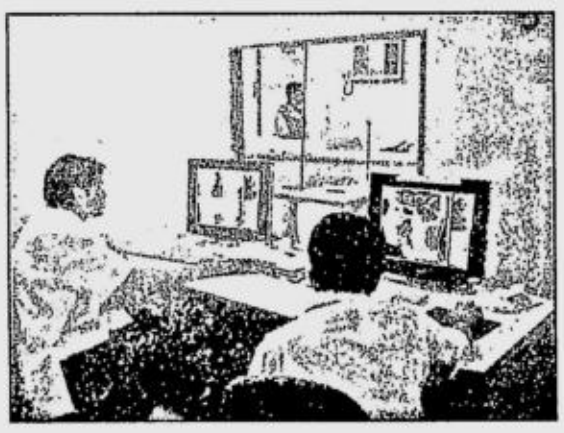

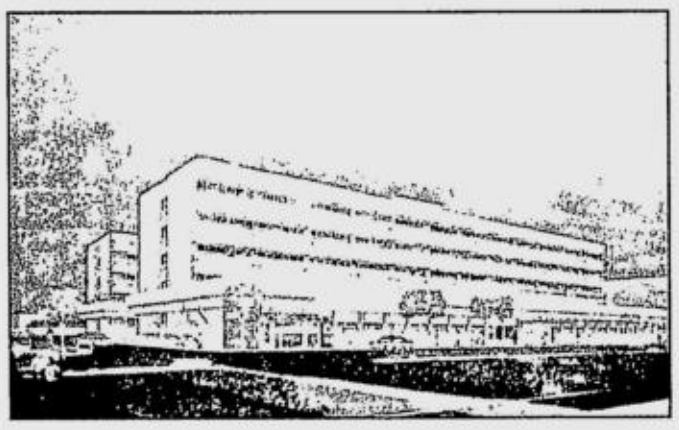

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Poe dared: Face foes now

From page A1

Ms Macapagal said, referring to the disqualification case against Poe.

"It is time to bring our respective platforms to the people," she said in a statement.

Ms Macapagal withdrew last week her offer to take part in a debate because Poe was not taking part. She later said that she would debate only with Poe.

The GMA 7-INQUIRER debate titled *Engkwentro 2004: Sino ang Karapat-dapat sa Pagkapangulo* (Encounter 2004: Who deserves the presidency?) will be taped at the GMA studios on March 29 and aired in two parts on April 4 and 11 from 9:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

It will focus on *kahirapan* (poverty) and *katiwalian* (corruption) and how the presidential candidates would address them.

"We feel a debate is one way to strengthen our democratic practice," INQUIRER president Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez said Wednesday at the meeting with INQUIRER and GMA 7 executives and the representatives of the six presidential candidates.

"We owe it to our electorate to be able to make an informed choice," she said.

GMA 7 president Felipe Gozon said the candidates must inform the electorate of their stands on issues and how they propose to resolve the serious national problems.

PDI PHOTO

"SPEAK up," Raul Roco seemed to be telling his rival Poe with Ping Lacson's approval before dinner hosted by Max Soliven last month.

Justify record

The representatives of Roco, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Bro. Eddie Villanueva and businessman Eddie Gil said their principals would attend the GMA 7-INQUIRER debate.

Turning to Ms Macapagal, Roco said: "The administration must now justify its record. There must be a debate (to) explain to the people what have they done for the past three years? Did they make the people suffer more? Made the Cabinet wealthier? They have solved the problems of poverty of some Cabinet members."

He said the people were entitled to know where their leaders would take them.

Disqualification by voters

Roco, his running mate Herminio Aquino and the Alyansa ng Pag-asa senatorial candidates made a brief stop in Koronadal on their second day swing through South Cotabato, Sarangani and Sultan Kudarat.

Roco said the people must start asking questions about the qualifications and competence of Poe to run this country, and "whether somebody who has finished second-year high school can solve the problems of the Philippines—in education, security and foreign affairs."

Renewing his challenge for Poe to face him in a debate, Roco said: "Fernando Poe must explain what he will do if he becomes president. Can he defend and preserve the Constitution? Can he do justice to every man? Can he manage as an executive officer of the Republic of the Philippines? Can he solve poverty by movies? That must be explained by Fernando Poe."

Roco said that since the technical disqualification that Malacañang had tried to initiate against Poe had failed, the "disqualification by the people will now start."

Silence

In a statement, the Alyansa ng Pag-asa standard-bearer said he thought it was about time Poe stopped hiding behind the backs of his advisers and agreed to a presidential debate on issues and programs of government so that the electorate could make an 'intelligent decision."

"Poe should be ashamed of himself. If he still insists on keeping quiet, what can the Filipino voters expect in a Poe presidency? Silence?" Roco said in the statement.

"Poe must realize that this is what democracy is all about—a resounding clash of ideas that generate solutions toward the alleviation of our people's economic problems, their social concerns and hopes for tomorrow," he said.

Roco's campaign manager, Jaime Galvez-Tan, said that a presidential debate would benefit the electorate.

"Now that the passionate issue of the FPJ citizenship is over, it's now time for the Filipino people to be the winners. And they can only be winners if all candidates face the nation and present their platforms of government," Galvez-Tan said in an interview.

Replace GMA

Apart from platforms of government, the presidential candidates should expound on the pressing problems of poverty, graft and corruption, and unemployment, he said.

"It's now time to give an opportunity to the voters to make an informed choice and come up with an intelligent vote," said Galvez-Tan, who briefly served as health secretary in 1995 during the Ramos administration.

Roco maintained that the Supreme Court decision had cleared the air, and the battle was now between him and Poe.

"There is no question in our mind that the Macapagal administration should be replaced. You saw it in the market. We see it in every market we go to. Now the question is whether it will be replaced by a Roco administration or a Fernando Poe administration."

Wasted vote

Roco also took the administration camp to task for saying that a vote for Roco would be for naught.

He said "a vote for Ms Macaapgal is a wasted vote," explaining that people they had met on the campaign trail were angry at the administration.

"Very few people want to vote for her. The administration candidates will be defeated because they can't justify their (failures)," Roco said.

Roco believed that he and his slate were the only ones competent to take up the leadership on June 30.

"We submit that it is Roco," he said. "The Alyansa ng Pag-Asa has prepared well. We submit it as our credentials to the Filipino people. We are ready for a public debate."

He reiterated that the Alyansa ng Pag-Asa had the machinery and the funds to run a presidential campaign.

Roco also called on the youth to serve as catalysts for change. "The youth has always been the trigger for change, there must be a youth revolution because they—and the poor—would suffer most if there is no revolution. And we have every reason to hope that the youth will help." ***With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana and TJ Burgonio***

Lawyer 'utterly failed' to prove case, says SC

From page A1

Fornier said he would appeal the ruling. He said he was confident that the arguments in the appeal would convince two or more justices in the majority to change their minds.

The tribunal had voted 8-5 to junk Fornier's petition.

Fornier noted that the Commission on Elections en banc as well as its first division had earlier voted unanimously against his petition.

"But in the Supreme Court, five justices agreed with us," he said. "We are going up the hill slowly but surely. This is just a way of the Lord to rell us to work harder."

Only Fornier's petition

The high court said it considered only Fornier's petition and dismissed outright those of Maria Jeanette Tecson and Zoilo Velez for lack of jurisdiction and "prematurity."

Tecson and Velez had questioned Poe's qualification to be a presidential candidate, but the tribunal said this was premature and that it could rule on their petitions only after the May elections.

Fornier brought the case to the tribunal, claiming that Poe had stated in his certificate of candidacy that he was a natural-born Filipino despite his alleged knowledge to the contrary.

The lawyer said the Comelec committed grave abuse of discretion when it dismissed the initial petition for disqualification that he had lodged before the poll body.

Aunt's declaration

The tribunal also recognized as proof of Poe's filiation a declaration by his maternal aunt, Ruby Kelley Mangahas, that Poe's father had recognized him as his son.

"The duly notarized declaration made by (Mangahas) ... submitted as Exhibit 20 before the Comelec, might be accepted to prove the acts of Allan F. Poe, recognizing his own paternal relationship with FPJ, [that is], living together with Bessie Kelley [Poe's mother] and his children in one house, and as one family," the tribunal said.

It also said rulings saying that an illegitimate child should follow the citizenship of the mother did not apply in the present case.

"Where jurisprudence regarded an illegitimate child as taking after the citizenship of its mother, it did so for the benefit of the child," the tribunal said.

"It was to ensure a Filipino nationality for the illegitimate child of an alien father in line with the assumption that the mother had custody, would exercise parental authority, and had the duty to support her illegitimate child. It was to help the child, not to prejudice or discriminate against him."

But Andresito Fornier, a brother of petitioner Fornier and also a lawyer, said the high court did not dwell on the points they had raised. He said he and his brother would file a motion for reconsideration.

He argued that the evidence they had submitted clearly showed that Poe was not a natural-born Filipino.

Comelec relieved

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos expressed relief at the high court's ruling, saying it cleared the way for voters to choose their candidate on May 10.

"Somehow it's a relief," Abalos said. "It's over. Now that the doubts have been cleared, all presidential candidates can now be considered candidates and the people would have a choice."

Guillermo Luz, executive director of the National Movement for Free Elections or Namfrel, said the verdict eliminated the prevailing "uncertainty."

"It's good for the Supreme Court to have made its decision sooner rather than later," he said in an interview. "Waiting longer would just have stretched out this uncertainty. I think remanding [the case to a lower court] would have made it more uncertain and unstable over time."

Voters must now choose who among the presidential candidates is the best to lead the country, Luz said.

Commissioner Manuel Barcelona Jr., whose recent appointment by Malacañang was questioned by various sectors, said the tribunal's ruling should be respected.

'Triumph of justice'

"In the light of these circumstances, any differences of opinion must therefore find respite... Be that as it may, we now move on and focus our attention [on] more pressing concerns at hand," he said in a prepared statement.

President Macapagal-Arroyo hailed the high court's ruling as a "triumph of impartial justice."

"As I have always said in the past, we follow the rule of law and not the rule of threat or intimidation," she said, alluding to threats made by Poe supporters to mount huge protest actions if the tribunal disqualified the standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Law's final arbiter

She said the people must keep faith in the Supreme Court as the final arbiter of the law and abide by its decisions.

Michael Defensor, campaign spokesperson for Ms Macapagal, said Poe's camp had lost its rallying call with the resolution of the citizenship issue.

"They keep saying that the administration is behind the disqualification, which is not true," he said. "Now that this is over, the spotlight would be on what [the candidates] are and what they have to offer our people." ***With reports from Martin P. Marfil and Juliet Labog-Javellana***

FPJ croons 'All the Way' in Leyte sortie

From page A1

contenders except for President Macapagal-Arroyo to rally behind Poe, the 64-year-old movie idol said he would prefer that everyone "rally for the truth" instead.

"My approach is to unite all of us," he said in Taglish. "We must be united for our country once and for all. We must go for it."

Poe said what is important now is to rid the election campaign of the dirty tricks that marked past campaigns.

Asked if he would coalesce with other presidential candidates, he said he did not know of ongoing negotiations to that effect.

But in an interview with dzRH before he left for Leyte, Poe said there was a possibility of unity between his camp and that of Sen. Panfilo Lacson, standard-bearer of a faction in the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino.

He said he and Lacson had an "open line" between them.

Happy mood

Poe said that after learning that the Supreme Court had recognized him as a natural-born Filipino and thus qualified to run for president, he rushed home from his office to tell his wife, actress Susan Roces, the good news.

It turned out that his wife, whom he fondly calls Inday, had heard the news from someone else.

"*Masaya ang lahat* (Everyone is happy)," he said of his family, adding that his daughter Mary Grace phoned him from the United States after hearing the news.

"This is the first time I feel that I am a natural-born Filipino," he said.

Poe said he never feared the tribunal would rule against him because he knew that "the truth will come out."

He said his campaign would now be able to proceed because a fish bone in his throat had been removed: "*Kung baga, nawala yung tinik sa lalamunan... Medyo naalis.*"

Poe acknowledged that the tribunal's ruling had boosted his confidence.

What hurt him the most, he said, was when during the oral arguments on the case he was required to prove that his father had recognized him as his son. "*Para bang lumalabas na hindi ko tatay yung tatay ko, at hindi ko kapatid yung mga kapatid ko. Medyo nakakasakit yun. Ibang klase yun,*" he said.

Reminded that the lawyers who filed the disqualification petition planned to appeal the verdict, he said he could not see how the decision could be overturned.

Sing a song

Asked what song came to his mind after his legal victory, Poe initially hesitated and then said it was the song titled "All the Way."

In Ormoc City, he sprang a surprise when he launched into a song for some 2,000 people packing the Baybay gymnasium.

He sang only a few lines of the Nonoy Zuñiga song "Kumusta Ka?" but it was enough to send his audience cheering wildly.

Earlier, Poe's running mate Sen. Loren Legarda sang "Kahit Konting Pagtingin," the theme song of one of his movies.

Legarda was midway through the song when Poe rose and sang.

"It was Loren who suggested that he sing today," Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Poe's personal campaign manager, told reporters.

Sotto said it was a new act that everyone in the KNP camp agreed to "test" before the rally began.

At the rally, Poe ditched his usual speech wherein he insists that he is a Filipino. He delivered a short speech underscoring the people's need for change, saying he represented those who wanted change and reform in government.

Warm reception

Residents of Maasin City gave Poe a warm reception.

As early as 7 a.m., more than 1,000 people had assembled at the Maasin port where the chopper carrying him and his party was expected to land for an 8:30 a.m. rally at the gymnasium about 200 meters away.

The crowd waited until about 11 a.m., when the chopper finally landed. But Poe stayed inside.

Another helicopter arrived shortly, bearing men with video cameras. It was only then that the seasoned actor got off the first chopper and waved at the crowd.

Poe was with some KNP senatorial candidates and fellow movie personalities Eddie Garcia and Richard Gomez.

It took 20 minutes before Poe could get into a waiting L300 van because his escorts had a difficult time warding off the crowd.

The people even chased after the van as it sped off to the gymnasium where about 6,000 people were waiting.

Cold shoulder

In stark contrast, local officials gave Poe the cold shoulder.

No city or provincial official was around to welcome him for his first sortie in Eastern Visayas.

His own candidate, reelectionist Rep. Aniceto Saludo of Southern Leyte, was not around. Saludo was said to have flown to the United States on Tuesday to attend to an important matter.

Only two town mayors joined Poe on stage—Edmund Villa of Sogod and Fe Edillo of Macrohon, both of the Partido ng Masang Pilipino.

Four other town mayors, also PMP members, chose to stay in the crowd—Roberto Lagumbay of Hinunangan, Albert Esclamado of Limasawa, Norma Lim of Malitbog and Rimmon Borces of Padre Burgos.

On Monday, Saludo asked Maasin Mayor Mercado, Lakas-CMD chair in the city, to welcome Poe and his party. But the request was turned down because of Mercado's affiliation with the ruling party.

Yesterday, not one of Poe's party members called on Mercado's office, which is just across from the gymnasium.

Mercado told the INQUIRER it was good that Poe and company did not come to his office. He did not elaborate.

Warring groups

Unity is also the theme of two warring groups of Poe supporters.

The Pro-Democracy Coalition of lawyer Manny Portes wants to forge unity with the Pinoy si FPJ of Horacio "Boy" Morales, one of Poe's campaign strategists.

"What's more important now is for us to join hands for FPJ's candidacy," said Arnold Obina, convenor of the coalition's People Alliance for Truth and Justice.

Obina said the high court's ruling should in fact set the stage for unity.

He proposed that the two factions hold a unity Mass and meet to plan ways to improve Poe's campaign.

"Personally, I think we should assess the style of the campaign, check if it has really been helping FPJ communicate more effectively with the people," Obina said in Filipino.

Groups under the Pinoy si FPJ and Pro-Democracy Coalition have been locked in a "turf war" since Poe announced his candidacy in November.

Each camp feels it played a bigger role than the other in convincing the high-school dropout to run for president, Obina said.

Easily the most visible among the groups, the Filipinos for Peace, Justice, and Progress Movement of Butch Cadsawan, launched a signature campaign to help convince Poe.

The FPJPM is under Morales' group, which also includes nongovernment organizations backing Poe's running mate.

Obina named other groups, like Portes' Freedom, Peace, and Justice Movement and the FPJ Volunteers Brigade, which had initiated similar campaigns but with less publicity.

He said there were now at least 30 groups of Poe supporters carrying his initials.

Reservations

Apart from the turf war, Obina said some of his colleagues had "reservations" with Morales, agrarian secretary during the Estrada administration. He did not elaborate.

The membership of the two factions may be another source of conflict. While the coalition is heavy with supporters from the middle class, the Morales faction has members mostly from the masses, Obina said.

Ronald Lumbao's People's Movement Against Poverty belongs to the Morales group. But Obina, a former PMAP officer, said even some of its members were not comfortable with the people in the umbrella organization. ***With reports from Jani Arnaiz, PDI Visayas Bureau; Christian V. Esguerra in Manila***

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Haiti rebels agree to lay down arms

PORT-AU-PRINCE—Haiti's Prime Minister Yvon Neptune declared a state of emergency, as rebels agreed to disarm and US and French troops staged a show of force in Port-au-Prince following deadly gun battles.

At least three people were killed Wednesday in downtown Port-au-Prince when police tried to reestablish control in the La Saline slum, a bastion of gangs loyal to fallen president Jean Bertrand Aristide.

US Marines and French forces later patrolled the streets in light armored vehicles to prevent a resurgence of killing, looting and arson that erupted after Aristide's flight into exile on Sunday.

Rebel leader Guy Philippe bowed to pressure and agreed to disarm his men after obtaining what he said were security guarantees in a meeting with the commander of the international force, US Marine Col. Mark Gurganus.

Emboldened by his rapturous welcome on entering the capital, Philippe on Tuesday had refused to lay down their weapons until pro-Aristide gangs, or "chimeres," were also disarmed.

The rebels had also threatened to arrest Neptune, a close Aristide ally who remains temporarily in office pending the establishment of a new government under an internationally backed power sharing plan. He has been guarded by US Marines since rebels threatened to arrest him on Tuesday.

Neptune on Wednesday declared a national state of emergency in part because of the continuing clashes. Officials said the measure means that certain constitutional guarantees would be suspended.

Neptune said vandalism and looting had caused 300 million dollars in damage—largely blamed on Aristide supporters—and announced the creation of a commission to coordinate national security until a new government is installed.

Aristide's successor, interim President Boniface Alexandre, named Haitian Coast Guard boss Leonce Charles to be the new national police chief.

The US Embassy asked Gurganus to meet with Philippe to demand he stand down.

A diplomatic source said that Gurganus delivered "an extremely blunt message" to Philippe, repeating the US position that he and his forces have no place in Haiti's political future and that they should honor a pledge to disarm now that Aristide was gone.

Gurganus later told reporters at his headquarters at Toussaint Louverture International Airport that the 10-minute meeting with Philippe had been polite.

"I was very happy with his responses," said Gurganus, standing alongside French commander Col. Daniel Leplatois. "I think he is a man of honor and he will do what he said."

The US and French colonels announced the start of the security patrols. *AFP*

Europe summer which killed 19,000 hottest in 500 years

By Paul Recer

WASHINGTON—The killing summer of 2003, when there were more than 19,000 deaths attributed to the heat, may have been the hottest in Europe in 500 years, according to an analysis of temperatures dating back to 1500.

"When you consider Europe as a whole, it was by far the hottest," said Jurg Luterbacher, climatologist and the first author of a study appearing this week in the journal Science.

Luterbacher, a researcher at the University of Bern, Switzerland, said increased temperatures were not limited to summer in Europe. Winters also have been warmer than the historical record.

He said the study found that the average winter and annual temperatures were the highest in 500 years in the three decades from 1973 to 2002.

Luterbacher said other studies have linked the rising average temperatures to global warming caused the burning of fossil fuels, but his team did not attempt to make such a connection.

"We don't make any analysis of the human influence," he said. "We don't attempt to determine the cause. We only report what we find."

Global warming

Other climatologists, however, say the new study agrees with models that have predicted a steady rise in global temperature as the result of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels and other sources.

Stephen Schneider, a climate expert at Stanford University and a prominent advocate for human-caused global warming, said the Luterbacher paper is consistent with what climate modelers have been predicting for 20 years.

"The data is starting to line up showing that those projections were correct," Schneider said. "We warned the world that this was likely to happen because we believed the theory, but couldn't actually prove it was happening. Now the data is coming in saying it is... getting clearer and clearer. This paper is yet another... saying that."

In the study, Luterbacher and his team analyzed the temperature history of Europe starting in 1500 to the present. For the earliest part of the half millennium, the temperatures are estimates based on proxy measures, such as tree rings and soil cores. But after about 1750, he said, actually instrumented readings became generally available throughout Europe.

During the 500 years, there were trends both toward cool and toward hot. The second hottest summer in the period was in 1757. That was followed by a cooling trend that continued until early in the 20th century. The summer of 1902, for instance, was the coolest of the entire record.

Starting in 1977, the record shows "an exceptionally strong, unprecedented warming," the researchers report, with average temperatures rising at the rate of about 0.36 degrees per decade.

Then came last summer.

"The summer of 2003 exceeded 1901 to 1995 European summer temperatures by around 2 degrees C (3.6 degrees F)," the study said. "Taking into account the uncertainties (in the study method), it appears that the summer of 2003 was very likely warmer than any other summer back to 1500."

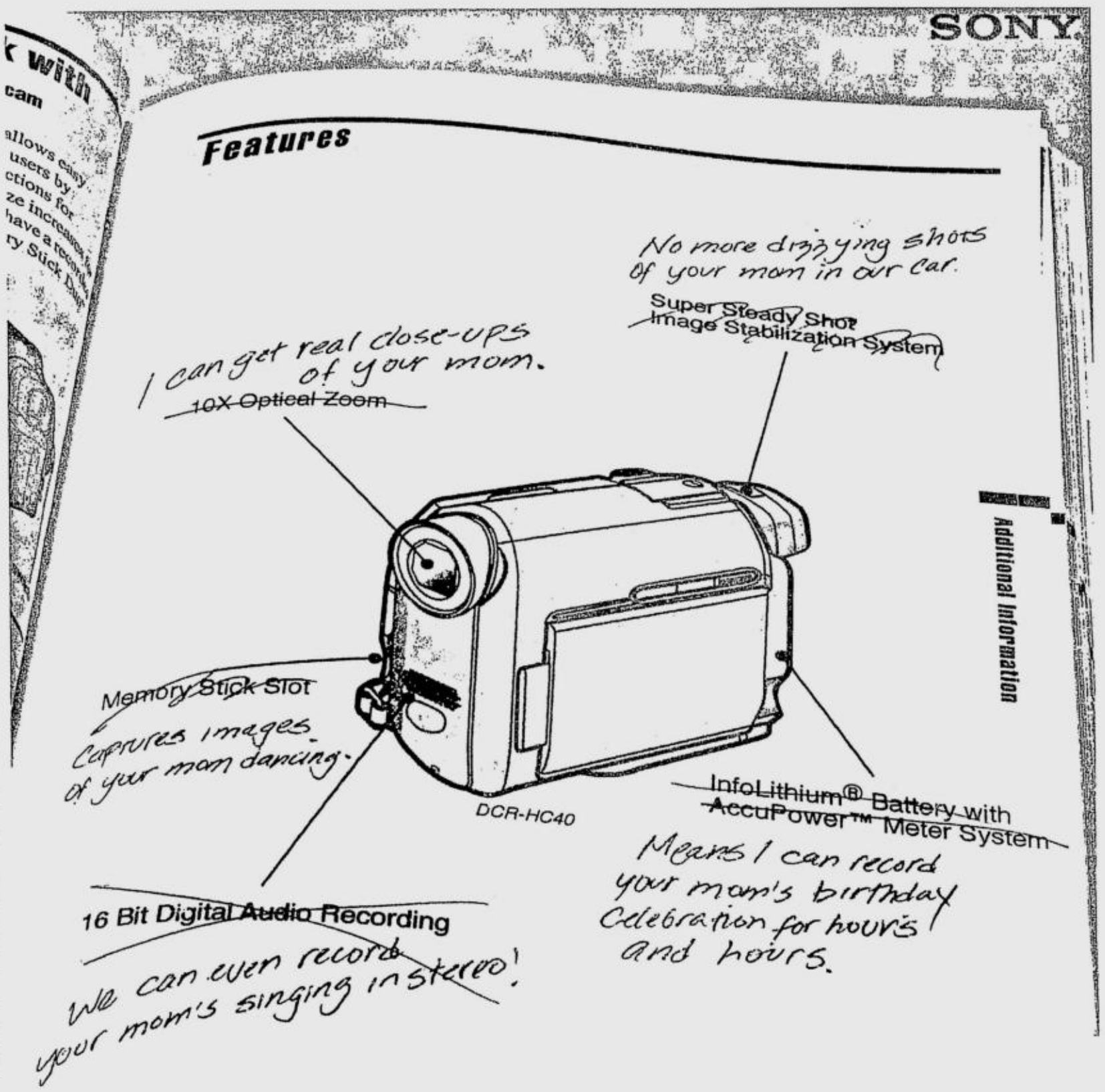
Deadliest heat wave

Record temperatures were recorded in most of the major cities of Europe last summer, with many readings over 100 degrees (38 degrees Celsius). Authorities have attributed thousands of deaths to the excess heat, making the heat wave one of the deadliest weather phenomena in the past century.

In France, the toll was estimated at about 14,802 dead. About 2,000 more than normal died in August in England and Wales. On Aug. 11, Britain's hottest day on record, there were 363 more deaths than average and the temperature reading reached 101.3 (38.5 degrees Celsius) in Brogdale in southeastern England.

Altogether in Europe, there were more than 19,000 excess deaths in the summer months. France was hardest hit, but the average number of summer deaths increased by 4,175 in Italy, 1,300 in Portugal and more than 1,000 in the Netherlands.

The intense heat also wilted crops, caused wildfires and continued a centurylong trend of melting the continent's glaciers. *AP*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Coalition officials pin Iraq anti-Shiite carnage on al-Qaida

BAGHDAD—Two days after some 170 Shiite Muslims were killed and more than 500 were wounded in bombings here and in the holy city of Karbala, coalition officials blamed the attacks on the al-Qaida terror network as the US military defended itself against charges it could have prevented the carnage.

As the war-torn country buried its dead and began three days of mourning, angry Iraqis on Wednesday slammed the US-led coalition for its continued failure to provide security nearly a year after the fall of dictator Saddam Hussein.

Simmering anti-US sentiment was evident as Shiites voiced frustration over the pace of the US-led reconstruction and the lack of security.

"Down, Down America," marchers chanted as they streamed down the street, with black flags of mourning waving in the air and coffins, draped in green, the color of Islam, floating over the sea of people.

Some of the coffins were said to carry just pieces of bodies because the corpses had been torn apart.

"The US military is the cause of our problems," people shouted as they approached the shrine of Muslim Prophet Mohammed's grandson, Hussein.

A statement attributed to al-Qaida denied any responsibility for the attacks, calling them "an American plot aimed at provoking sectarian conflict."

And the top US commander in Iraq said the United States had intelligence warnings of Tuesday's attacks and probably prevented even greater carnage with special operations raids the previous night on operatives of Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian Islamic militant with suspected links to al-Qaida.

Testifying in Washington before the House Armed Services Committee, Gen. John Abizaid said US and Iraqi forces foiled a third planned attack in Basra and thwarted plans to attack several prominent Shiite personalities.

"I believe the plan was for even greater carnage, and I think that joint action between Americans and Iraqis prevented that from happening, and we had better cooperation among various groups throughout Iraq in terms of security than is widely reported," said Abizaid.

"We have clear intelligence that ties Zarqawi to this attack," he told the committee, "we also have intelligence that shows there are some linkages between Zarqawi and former regime elements, particularly the Iraqi intelligence services."

The general said coordination between the Islamic militant and the former intelligence carried "a lot of danger for the force."

He said at least six suicide bombers carried out the attacks. *AFP*

Many believe Iraq war increased terror threat

WASHINGTON—A majority of people living in Mexico, Canada and in five major European countries say they think the war in Iraq increased the threat of terrorism in the world, Associated Press polls found.

In the United States, people were evenly divided on whether the war has increased or decreased the terror threat.

The AP polls were conducted by Ipsos, an international polling firm, in Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Mexico, Spain and the United States.

While a majority in each of the countries polled except the United States said the terrorism threat was greater now, fewer than one in 10 in any of the European countries said the terror threat had been decreased by the war.

In Canada and France, just over half felt it had been increased, whereas in Germany, three-fourths thought the Iraq war has made the terror problem worse.

Concern about terrorism was very high in Italy and Germany, where about seven in 10 said they were very worried or somewhat worried, and especially in Spain, 85 percent, where residents also have to contend with domestic terrorism by Basque separatists. The high levels of concern about terrorism are probably linked to the recent history of terror in those countries, one public opinion analyst said. *AP*

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Belgian 'monster' admits kidnap, but not murder

LON, Belgium—Belgian Marc Dutroux on Wednesday admitted kidnapping and raping young girls but denied murder, pointing the finger at his former wife and saying he was a pawn in a child-sex gang protected by authorities.

Taking the stand for the first time, Dutroux, a convicted child rapist, told a hushed courtroom he had hidden girls as young as 8 years old in a concealed dungeon under his house to protect them from prostitution.

"I accept responsibility," Dutroux said on the third day of a trial that has riveted a country struggling to come to terms with the gruesome saga. "It is regrettable."

But Dutroux, charged with kidnapping and raping six girls and murdering four of them in the mid-1990s, sought to put most of the blame on his ex-wife, Michelle Martin, and three male accomplices.

Jailed in the past for a series of violent rapes, including on minors, Dutroux faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment on his present charges. His trial is expected to last months.

Martin, who admitted to being an accomplice to some of the crimes, recounted the events in a steady voice and painted a sinister picture of her ex-husband.

"He's really like a guru of a sect," she said, describing him as abusive, vengeful, manipulative and dictatorial.

She said he had orchestrated all the kidnappings, but did not mention the existence of any child sex ring.

In often rambling and confused testimony, Dutroux admitted a role in abducting four girls who disappeared in 1995-1996 and having sex with three. But he denied killing any of them.

Dutroux depicted himself a reluctant pawn in the hands of a pedophile ring which had police and political protection that pressured him to help kidnap the girls.

He accused co-defendant Michel Nihoul and Bernard Weinstein, a Frenchman found murdered and buried in Dutroux's backyard in 1996, of planning to force the children into prostitution.

Dutroux denied killing Weinstein, which he had admitted in pre-trial custody, blaming the death on his ex-wife.

He also accused Martin of failing to care for 8-year-olds Julie Lejeune and Melissa Russo—the first two victims—who died of starvation in the dungeon while he was in prison for three months on unrelated charges.

He denied any involvement in their July 1995 kidnapping, telling the court he had found them at his home with Martin, drug addict Michel Lelievre, Nihoul and Weinstein.

Martin admitted having neglected Russo and Lejeune when Dutroux was in prison despite his orders to feed them. *Reuters*

Thai prostitutes thrown alive into croc-filled river

SYDNEY—Two Thai women who worked in Australia as prostitutes for several years were bound and thrown alive into a crocodile-infested river, police said Thursday.

The women's bodies were found Wednesday by tourists aboard a crocodile spotting boat floating in the Adelaide River about 70 km south of Darwin in the Northern Territory.

It was thought their bodies had been in the water for between 18 and 30 hours.

The incident comes amid government investigations into claims Thai women are brought to Australia to work in a well established sex slave network.

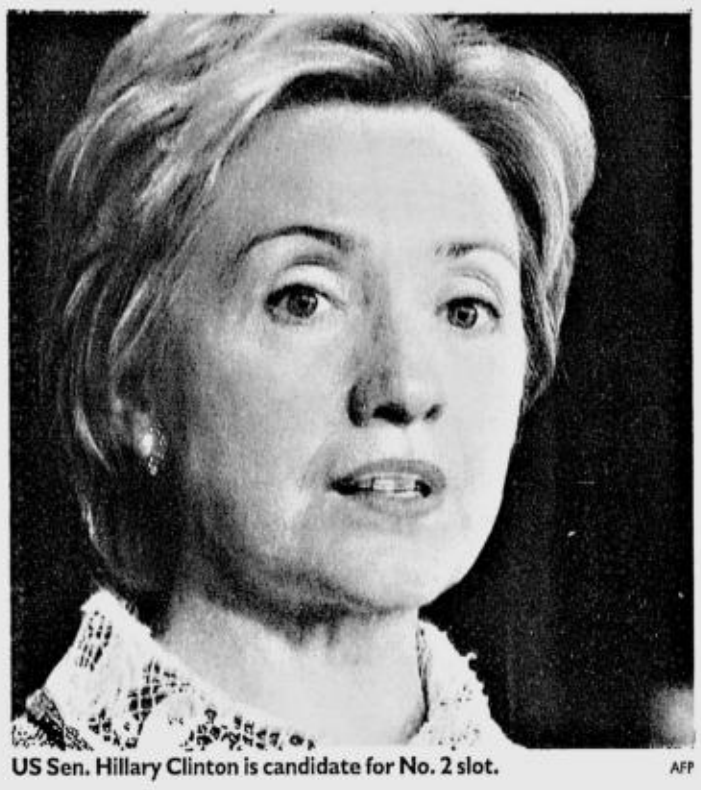
One woman has been formally identified as Phuangsri Kroksamrang, 58, and police were confident the other was Somjai Insamnan, 27.

Both were Australian permanent residents and had lived in Darwin for at least a decade, Detective Supt. Bert Hofer said.

The women, who lived in the same apartment block, were reported missing to police by friends Wednesday.

Hofer said post-mortem examinations had not been able to determine whether the women, who were found clothed, had been sexually assaulted before they died.

"The bodies were intact, there were no broken limbs, there was no obvious signs of trauma," he said. *AFP*



US Sen. Hillary Clinton is candidate for No. 2 slot. AFP

Kerry begins search for veep

BOSTON—John Kerry, assured of the Democratic nomination, is exploring options for a running mate, from Southerners who can provide regional balance to those who can help highlight economic problems under President George W. Bush.

To lead the search process, Kerry on Wednesday named Jim Johnson, a prominent Washington Democrat and former aide to Vice President Walter Mondale. Johnson is vice president of a merchant banking firm.

Kerry says he wants to keep the process private and won't "throw names around." He speaks from experience, having made Al Gore's short list in 2000 only to be passed over for Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman.

Kerry has said he wants someone he gets along with who also would be capable of assuming the presidency. The Massachusetts senator will also be looking for someone with strengths that negate his weaknesses.

With 19 years in the Senate, Kerry may look outside Washington to governors such as Tom Vilsack of Iowa, Mark Warner of Virginia or Janet Napolitano of Arizona. An industrial state governor who can relate to the common man, such as Pennsylvania's Ed Rendell, could help offset Kerry's reputation for aloofness. New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson could create excitement as the first Hispanic on a major party ticket.

Kerry may consider someone with economic experience to send a message of fiscal responsibility to Wall Street. Possibilities include Fannie Mae chair and CEO Franklin Raines, who was former President Bill Clinton's budget director, or Robert Rubin, who was Clinton's Treasury secretary.

The Kerry campaign was vague about the timetable for a decision; vetting candidates often takes weeks. The benefit of a quick decision is a partner to help spread the message in competitive states, as well as to help raise money. The disadvantage is eliminating, early on, the one question mark that might keep the public captivated.

"No decisions have even been remotely made. It was important to him to start the process right away," said Kerry spokesperson David Wade.

Kerry may look to a former rival who is an experienced campaigner with a built-in, fund-raising network. North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, Missouri Rep. Dick Gephardt and retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark all endorsed Kerry when they exited the race and have pledged to support him. Before Clark became a candidate, Kerry advisers said a ticket with the two decorated Vietnam War veterans could be a powerful force with a nation at war.

Kerry may be comfortable with a Democrat he's worked with in the Senate, particularly one who could give a regional or gender balance to the ticket. Possibilities include Senators Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas and Dianne Feinstein of California.

New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton repeatedly has said she intends to complete her term, which ends in 2006, but has not ruled out running for president in 2008 if Bush is reelected. If Kerry is well-positioned to win the race this year, however, Clinton may find the ticket too attractive to pass up—if asked. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Highest-level visit to Libya

WASHINGTON—US Assistant Secretary of State William Burns is considering traveling to Libya this month in what diplomats believe would be the highest-level US visit in more than three decades, officials said on Wednesday. As part of a rapprochement after Tripoli's shock Dec. 19 decision to abandon its weapons of mass destruction programs, Burns told lawmakers on Tuesday he planned to meet Libyan officials this month but did not say when or where. US officials said Burns was weighing the visit to Libya as part of a broader Middle East trip in late March, a powerful gesture after years of enmity that is beginning to dissipate with Tripoli's decision to end efforts to build weapons of mass destruction and its admission of responsibility for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. The visit could also signal further progress in dismantling US economic sanctions imposed on Libya over the last quarter century that, among other things, have barred US oil companies from working there for more than a decade. *Reuters*

Annan summons UK envoy

UNITED NATIONS—UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has called the British ambassador to a meeting on Thursday after his spokesman said he wanted a fuller explanation of alleged British bugging of his office. The meeting, set on Wednesday, falls a week after Clare Short, Britain's former international development secretary, disclosed that British intelligence agents spied on Annan ahead of the US-led invasion of Iraq last March. UN spokesperson Fred Eckhard responded at the time by saying the bugging, if true, violated international law and should immediately be stopped. Eckhard later added, "I think it's probably safe to say that he would like a fuller explanation," when asked if Annan was waiting for the British government to contact him to offer an explanation or assurances there would be no more spying. *Reuters*

3 Hamas members killed

GAZA CITY—Three members of the hardline Palestinian movement Hamas suspected of planning an imminent attack on Israel were killed Wednesday in an Israeli helicopter strike on their car near Gaza City. The car was targeted with two rockets close to the Jewish settlement of Netzarim, which lies just south of Gaza City, witnesses said. Medical sources at Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital said two passers-by were injured in the attack. The three dead—named as Ammar Hassan, 25, Ibrahim al-Deiri, 38, and Tarad al-Jamal, 24—were all members of the Islamist movement Hamas, according to Hamas and Palestinian security sources. An Israeli military spokesperson said the car had been targeted as it was carrying leading Hamas members suspected of planning future attacks. *AFP*

No gay unions in NY

NEW YORK—New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer said on Wednesday the state's laws do not permit gay marriage, dealing a harsh blow to the growing nationwide battle for same-sex weddings. Spurred to give an opinion after a small town mayor married gays last week, Spitzer said he personally supports the desire of same-sex couples to marry but must uphold the state's laws. On the West Coast, however, scores of gay couples exchanged wedding vows and lined up in the rain to apply for marriage licenses after a county in Oregon declared the practice legal. *Reuters*

41 dead in Nepal clash

KATMANDU—At least 41 people were killed in a major gunfight between security forces and Maoist rebels in a town in eastern Nepal, the most serious clashes between the sides for months, the Army said Wednesday. Army spokesperson Col. Dipak Gurung said up to 2,000 armed Maoists raided the town of Bhojpur, headquarters of a district, attacked a telecommunications tower and tried to rob a state-run commercial bank. He said 31 security personnel and at least 10 Maoists died in the overnight clash, which began about 9:35 p.m. Tuesday. *AFP*

Pakistan begins mass burials

QUETTA, Pakistan—Grieving Shiite Muslims gathered in Pakistan's violence-hit southwest city Quetta Thursday for mass burials of the nearly 50 people killed in one of the country's bloodiest-ever sectarian attacks. At least 47 people, including six policemen, died after gunmen fired and threw grenades at an emotionally charged procession of Muslims from the Shiite minority on Tuesday, sparking mob violence and rioting. The attackers struck on the Shiite calendar's holiest day, Ashura, coinciding with multiple assaults on Shiite shrines in Iraqi cities that killed 140 pilgrims. *AFP*

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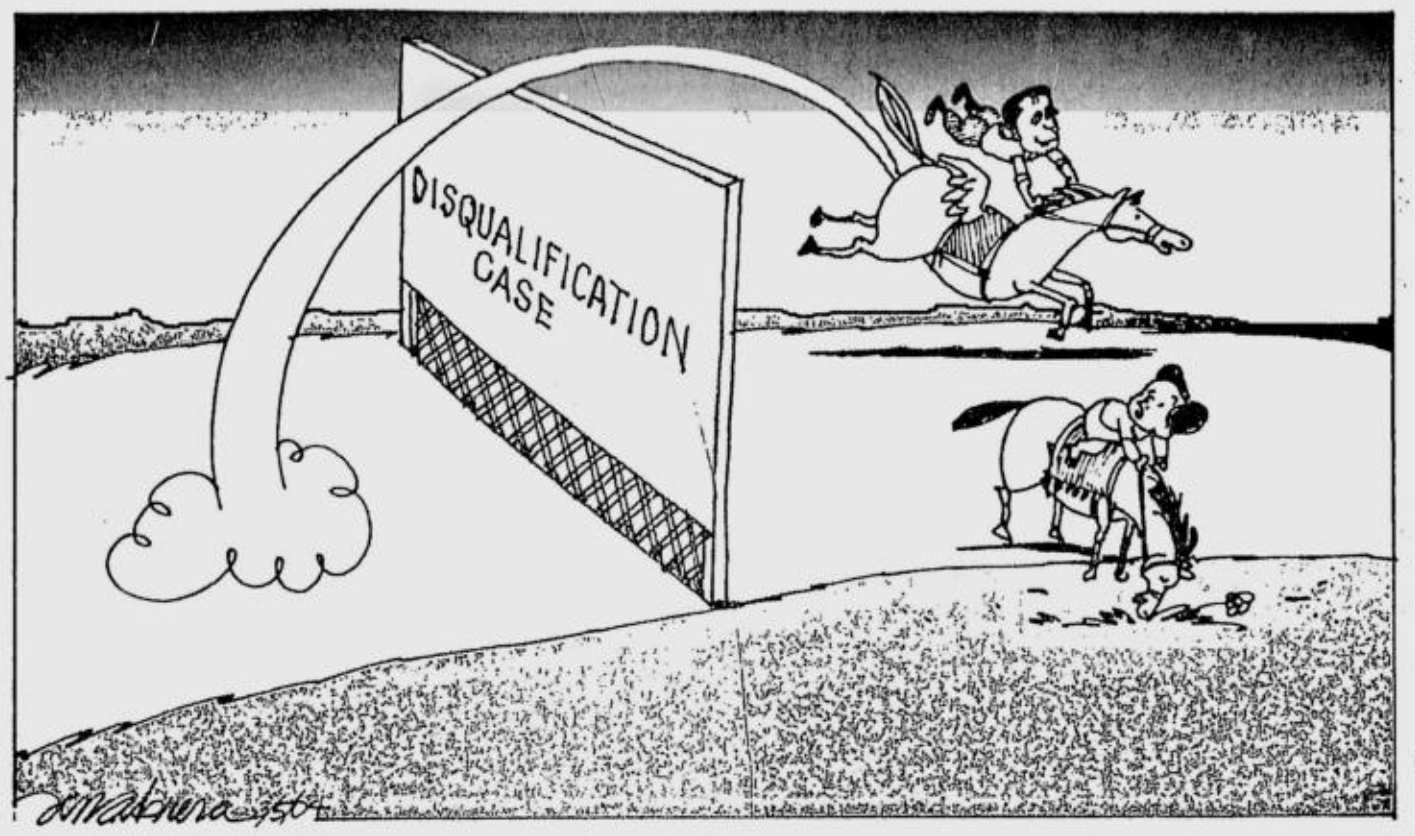

Mud and the military

EDITORIAL

PHILIPPINE elections since 1986 have historically been jittery, inflationary and ultimately destabilizing, so the government and the military should not anymore make things worse by releasing just about any report on destabilization plots that are neither here nor there. Definitely, they do not reassure investors, local and foreign, that the Philippines is worth investing in for the long term.

But alas, there's no long term in the limited visions of politicians who cannot go beyond narrow self-interests and are slaves to immediate gratification. And again, alas, the politicians don't only come in plainclothes, but also in fatigues.

Military men playing politics have made even more tenuous the country's democratic stability. The revelation by the Armed Forces of the Philippines that certain officers have been recruiting reservists for anti-government protests is worrisome. But more worrisome is the way the top brass has handled the matter, either leaking out or trial-ballooning certain names, and then herding off to detention anyone who is too shocked to protest. It has been a machine-gun affair. Anyone who comes in the way of the rapid-fire bullets and fails to duck is a dead duck; he gets tagged as an officer guilty of conduct unbecoming—and destabilizing.

The arbitrary manner shows: 1) a military that hardly conducts itself with utmost decorum and professionalism (it definitely shows a top brass that does not know the meaning of due process, a hallmark of civilian authority); and 2) a military that seems irredeemably slapdash in its intelligence and peacekeeping—which has a bearing on the country's defenses.

It is bothersome that a day after the AFP spokesman, Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, announced the arrest and detention of officers allegedly recruiting reservists to join pro-opposition rallies, two of the officers held a press conference to deny the allegation and that they had been detained.

The spokesman has now denied that he ever told the press that the officers had been arrested. He seems completely oblivious to how he has compromised the integrity of the military and the sovereignty of the republic by claiming some of the nation's own defenders have been plotting against the government but have not been detained, much less questioned by the authorities.

So what has he been talking about all along? His message is in the subtext: the stupidity of the AFP itself. This was particularly evident when Lucero told Agence France Press (a heart-to-heart talk between two AFPs) that they would like to find out from the officers—un-arrested, undetained and unquestioned yet—"if they are taking orders from any civilian or politician."

So why didn't they summon the officers for questioning in the first place? Rather than do honest and efficient investigative work, the officialdom would rather spill the beans on the press. And what beans they were, purely conjectural and speculative! Perhaps we have a military with brains the size of beans.

So efficient investigation has been replaced by psywar and political mudslinging. This is not surprising since Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, a retired military officer, is one of the campaign leaders of President Macapagal-Arroyo. A political partisan in the defense establishment at a time when the military is very divided, he himself personifies the gross lack of discretion, professionalism and decorum of the officer corps—the Frankenstein monsters bred during martial law.

Another example is Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus, the former intelligence chief, who has been acting like the attack dog of the administration. He condemns the "political prostitutes" in the opposition. Look who's talking.

On the other side are retired generals and other officers who are cantankerous in their support of Poe, Lacson, Villanueva or Gil. These old fogies neither have the wisdom to drop dead nor the good grace to fade away—like what good soldiers are supposed to do, if we are to believe Douglas MacArthur. Even Sen. Gregorio Honasan has demeaned his office by acting as bodyguard and security detail to Fernando Poe Jr.

What we are seeing is the virus of barangay politics spreading like a contagion, maiming and destroying the body politic. And the military seems part of the contagion, with contentious, trigger-happy partisans taking sides and hurling mud at one another. And the nation gets caught in the crossfire.

SC decision tempered by SWS survey

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE EUPHORIA of the Fernando Poe Jr. camp over the Supreme Court decision dismissing the disqualification petitions against their idol was tempered by the latest Social Weather Stations survey showing FPJ in a statistical tie with President Macapagal-Arroyo. Da King had been very much ahead in earlier surveys, but GMA has been able to catch up. It also showed that the Pulse Asia survey that had similar findings but which was widely doubted because it showed GMA catching up with FPJ was correct after all.

Is the FPJ steamroller slowing down? Or is the GMA locomotive just too fast?

Not to worry, said an FPJ leader. Now that the sword of Damocles over FPJ's head has been removed, watch his survey ratings shoot up. And the campaign contributions. Those who have been holding off, waiting for how the Supreme Court will decide, will hesitate no more, he said.

The surprising thing in the new poll is that GMA is ahead of FPJ in Mindanao where Muslims supposedly shoot up the movie screens when their hero is beaten by the *contra-vida*. That can only mean that GMA is preferred by the Christians there.

And what has been slowing down FPJ? Is the propaganda of the administration against him taking effect? Is it his lack of a platform of government? Is it his refusal to participate in a debate among presidential candidates? Is it his disinclination to give meaningful interviews with media? (I don't think the recent television interview of him by Max Soliven in "Impact" had any effect yet in the survey.) Is it because his campaign speeches don't contain much except punch lines from his movies?

Of course, the rapid advance of GMA can be explained by patronage. Reelectionist presidents never hesitate to use patronage to court votes, and GMA is no exception. She has been distributing government checks right and left in her campaign sorties, just like what her father did many years ago. The latest check was for P65 million in tobacco excise taxes given to La Union.

Expect more checks to be distributed as the campaign goes on. The question is, are those checks funded? It has happened in the past that many such checks couldn't be encashed by the local governments because there wasn't enough cash behind them.

* * *

Richard Nixon lost to John F. Kennedy the first time he ran for president because of a televised debate between them. Nixon lost in that debate because of a five o'clock shadow that showed through his makeup. Maybe that's the reason FPJ, or his handlers, hesitate to join a presidential debate. A debate can make or break a candidate. And after watching him in "Impact" (where his handlers let him down by not preparing him better for the interview), it is almost sure that the other candidates will make short shrift of him during the debate.

GMA is being smart in shying away from the debate if FPJ isn't there. She and FPJ are the leading candidates. She would like to show him up. But if he isn't there, how can she do that?

On the other hand, the other debaters can show her up. As the incumbent, she would be the whipping boy for all the ills of government and society. So she may be thinking that she has everything to lose and nothing to gain in a debate where her principal rival is not present.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson may not be as smart. He doesn't want to join if GMA doesn't join. It is understandable why it is advantageous to him if GMA is there. She would be his target, and obviously he has plenty of ammunition against her.

But unlike GMA and FPJ, who are the leaders in the contest, Lacson is behind in the surveys. Therefore, he has nothing to lose and everything to gain in the debate. Boycotting it just because GMA isn't there may be the wrong decision. He would be missing an opportunity to convince more people that he has something up there and can hold his own against his rivals. It's a golden opportunity to win more votes. He shouldn't pass it up.

The *llamado* in the debate is, of course, Raul Roco. He is the most articulate and has the most experience in public speaking. That is why he wants it very much and he has been egging FPJ to join. It is his chance to cut him down.

But Bro. Eddie Villanueva is no pushover. He is also a veteran of public speaking and religious sermons. He has been doing it every day for years.

As for the other Eddie, I'm not sure if he should even be invited. I still don't understand why the Commission on Elections didn't classify him as a nuisance candidate when just his boast that he would pay with his own money the Philippine foreign debt is enough to put him in that class.

That is probably why Ely Pamatong is so furious. If he was disqualified as a nuisance candidate, why not Gil?

Roco may be the best debater but he is at a disadvantage beside his rivals: he looks unhealthy. He has a big paunch which would be very obvious beside Lacson, Villanueva, FPJ and GMA who have trim figures and look fit. Even Eddie Gil, were it not for his toupee, looks better.

Roco has a body that is called in medical parlance "apple-shape." Any doctor will tell you that a person who has an "apple-shape" body is at high risk for cardiovascular diseases—heart disease that can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney failure. Such a person will be at high risk in a very stressful job like the presidency. I suggest Roco undertake a reducing regimen, maybe enroll in a gym, eat less and exercise more.

Blindness

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I REMEMBER again a story the late Bobbit Sanchez told me. It was the campaign of 1992, he was plugging for Jovito Salonga and was stumping with him and his senatorial slate in various places. In one of those places, an impoverished rural community, their audience kept asking what they had to offer. The other candidates, the folk said, had offered a basketball court, an artesian well, and even money. What did they have to show for being there?

It seemed to him, Bobbit said, that he was in the middle of a transaction, the only thing that needed to be done was bargain for the price of the goods. He got a little pissed off, Bobbit said, and could not help but blurt out his resentment. The reason this country had corrupt officials, he lectured his audience, was that the people made them so—no, forced them to become so. Here they were offering to be honest and clean, and there they were demanding they be not so. What could possibly come from a transaction like that? Could they trust someone who bought their votes for basketball courts, artesian wells and money? Someone who does that could only be trusted to steal avidly to make up for their expense.

"I doubt we got their votes from them after that," Bobbit laughed as he told the story.

It's the kind of laughter, however, that induces tears. Of course, as the documentary "Riles" shows, it's another world entirely, the one the poor of this country inhabit. And we, quite apart from candidates, would do well to try to understand that world before lending blithe judgments about the suicidal tendencies of those who live in it. But it's tragic nonetheless, and truly, if unwittingly, suicidal.

It raises some serious questions about how much we ourselves contribute to making politics, especially electoral politics, the way it is. Easy to complain about the candidates being corrupt, cynical and incompetent, but are they so in spite of us or because of us? Are they foisting themselves on us or are we demanding to have them tyrannize us?

The answer is not easily stacked in favor of the first. And this doesn't just have to do with the poor who tend to defy behavior of the kind we understand from living lives of a kind we refuse to understand. Only recently, I also heard someone who is campaigning for Raul Roco tell me in great distress he had just come from a forum of fairly well-off people and someone had asked, not entirely in jest, why he would want a blind man in the Senate. His question sparked much laughter among the rest of the audience.

His question, of course, referred to Nicanor Gatmaitan, a lawyer whose eyesight has gone but who is determined to become a lawmaker after having been a law-dispenser. But on the whole, the question was meant to question the quality or timber of the senatorial slate of the Alliance of Hope, which many people have dismissed as lightweight. Gatmaitan merely provided the magnet for it.

Well, the question is funny. But after your mirth subsides, you wonder about its wisdom. Why shouldn't we want someone like Gatmaitan in the Senate? The fellow at least has proven that impairment of eyesight is not an impairment of ability. No, more than that, he has proven that impairment of eyesight is not an impairment of vision.

Gatmaitan graduated from the UP College of Law in 1973 and is a member of the New York bar. He has written pleadings to the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court in Braille, and though I doubt that the judges of the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court read Braille, they have people to translate it. I suspect Gatmaitan writes more clearly and insightfully in Braille than most judges, justices among them, write in English, to go by the opaque language they use, which is meant to disguise gibberish. More to the point, Gatmaitan has given copious pro bono service to the disabled.

From the other end, who are the other senatorial candidates who are supposed to be heavyweights? Juan Ponce Enrile, Ernesto Maceda, Miriam Defensor-Santiago? If they are heavyweights, it is only in the area of betraying the public trust, if not indeed everything this country holds dear. Enrile was one of Marcos' *berdugos*, Maceda is the person Arsenio Lacson called "so young and so corrupt," and Santiago cannot make up her mind what she wants to be for reasons that may have to do with the lack of it. They are not laughable and Gatmaitan is? Indeed, they are the most serious candidates in the world and Gatmaitan is not?

The only seeing person in Sophocles' famous tragedy "Oedipus Rex," is Tiresias, the seer. Everybody else is blind in the moral or psychological sense, everybody else is confused. Only Tiresias is not blind in the moral or psychological sense, only Tiresias is not confused: And he is blind in the physical sense. But though blind, he is able to make sense of the situation around him. Though blind, he helps everyone around him see.

It is the perfect commentary to our situation. The kind of judgments we make not just about the candidates but about the world around us must make a visitor from another planet, or even just another country, wonder who is blind and who is seeing in this country. In the land of the blind, the saying goes, the one-eyed is king. We have a variation to that, which is that in the land of the sighted but who can't see, the blind who can see is king.

Or should be. We don't make them kings, we become paupers.

We do deserve the candidates we get. We do deserve the winners we get. We do deserve the rulers we get. The power to make leaders lies in our hands, that is what the vote is for. We choose to be blind, we will get blind leaders. They may have eyes, they may spot form and color, but they won't see.

Certainly, they won't see you.

Clearing the deck

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE SUPREME Court decision, holding that Fernando Poe Jr. is a natural-born Filipino and therefore is qualified to stand for president, settled only the issue of his compliance with the citizenship requirement laid down by the Constitution.

The decision was well received by the opposition and the administration, as well as by the business community, which had been worried that a disqualification could trigger a fresh round of unrest, stirred up mainly by Poe's followers. The 8-5 decision (with one abstention) is one of the few decisions of the Court that have not come under fierce partisan attack since it upheld the legitimacy of the accession to the presidency of then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The reaction of the administration is that it accepts without reservation the decision, and there has never been any doubt about this. The anxieties have always come from the opposition, fueled by its threats that it would unleash mobs to rampage if Poe were disqualified. Now the Court smells good to the opposition, after it had won its case.

Opposition stalwarts said that they had always been "confident" that their position would be upheld by the Court. It they were confident, why did they threaten unrest in the event of an adverse decision? The threat of violence was clearly intended to intimidate the Court.

Poe could not resist banality by saying that he had been "vindicated" by the Court, and his voluble surrogate, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, said the decision "saved" the country from turbulence ahead of the elections. Saved from whom?

The decision was received with relief by the business community which has been held hostage by the wave of unsettling political events in the wake of the presidential campaign, not least the threat of mob action coming on top of endless rounds of coup rumors.

It should be clear that the Court's decision has not vindicated Poe's qualifications to run for president, other than his citizenship status. It has given the country respite from the anxieties stemming from unresolved issues, especially the citizenship question. The decision merely cleared the path for us to go back to the central issues of the elections, which are policies and platforms, and allows us to refocus our attention to programs presidential candidates are offering to the voters. Now, Poe cannot continue to shirk the pressure for his participation in a public debate.

Elections are occasions for communication between candidates and the people and are a test of whether successful candidates can carry on communication with the people when they are in office. The presidency is a bully pulpit from which the president conducts a continuing dialogue with the people in order to win their support for a new government's policies and program. Election debates are only the testing ground of the capacity of leaders to maintain dialogue with the people and constantly mobilize the consent of the governed.

The Court's decision, while putting behind us the issue of citizenship qualification, takes us to square one of the elections, which is the question of platforms.

A day before the Court handed down its decision, the press published reports of the latest survey showing that President Macapagal has again overtaken Poe. The Social Weather Stations survey, taken on Feb. 17-25, put the President marginally ahead of Poe. She polled 31.8 percent, compared with Poe's 30.5 percent. Raul Roco polled 17.9 percent to take third place.

The results of the new survey contrasted with those of a previous SWS survey, taken only two weeks earlier, which found Poe ahead of the President by some 9 percentage points. The Feb. 17-25 SWS survey tended to confirm the results of two Pulse Asia surveys, taken from Jan. 23 to Feb. 8 and from Feb. 16 to 20, which showed the President catching up with Poe and running neck and neck with him.

Both the SWS' and Pulse Asia's most recent surveys indicate the volatility of the voters' mood and the fragility of the perception that anyone has taken a clear lead or is romping away toward a landslide victory. From the see-sawing results, a landslide by anyone is not in the cards. Neither Poe nor the President can be confident of winning, given the large number of undecided or swing voters. The President has to work harder than Poe and she can't afford to be in a celebratory mood on the basis of a narrow catch-up.

Sotto can always say the poll results are meant to condition the voters to accept a Macapagal victory. But one effect close polls have is that it encourages voters to use their own minds and not allow the polls to make decisions for them. The message signaled by the polls is that issues might play a more important role in helping voters make up their minds about whom to elect in the next few weeks.

Whether or not the citizenship issue has dragged down Poe is a question that cannot be dismissed out of hand. Clearly that was a salient issue during the past few weeks. There might be indications that Poe's avoidance of debate has also been hurting his chances. If this were the case, the more he declines to debate, the more chances he gives to his rivals to present their case and the more he proves their attack that he has nothing to offer.

Now that the deck is clear of the citizenship issue, Poe's evasion of the debate is more sharply highlighted. Poe's opponents are pressing him on this issue. They sense he has been wounded and they smell blood. They see traces of blood in the survey results of the past few weeks, in which Poe has not widened his lead but instead yielded his front-running position. The underdog has begun to move ahead of him.

FPJ and young voters

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

EVEN with the Supreme Court ruling on the citizenship of Fernando Poe Jr., and thus his eligibility to run for president, this doesn't mean that we've seen the end of electoral protests in the ongoing campaign.

Lawyers are supposedly contemplating filing charges against preacher "Brother" Eddie Villanueva on grounds that he's not a natural-born Filipino, having been "born again."

But if spiritual rebirth brings Villanueva's citizenship under a cloud of doubt, others argue that Eddie Gil's candidacy should likewise be voided, on grounds that he cannot afford "toupee" for a credible national campaign. (Thanks to my friend Jim Paredes for this tidbit!)

Speaking of Gil and his hairpiece, I caught the "Biodata" episode on Gil hosted by Vicky Morales, who must win a Famas award for "most successful attempt to keep a straight face during an interview."

The cornerstone of Gil's campaign seems to be his personal wealth, which he claims to be in the billions of dollars, and which he will use to lift all Filipinos out of poverty—if he wins as president.

"Is it true you have $4 billion in a Swiss bank account?" Morales wanted to know. "Yes, that's true," "admitted" Gil. How I wish Vicky followed that up by asking: "But if you really have $4 billion, why can't you buy a better toupee?"

Then again, if wearing a hairpiece that looks like road kill were enough to disqualify one from running for office, then I can mention any number of men in media, politics, business and entertainment just as guilty of the crime of wearing a heinous hairpiece.

Still on Gil, Rep. Jesli Lapus, who finds himself in the fortunate circumstance of running unopposed in his Tarlac congressional district, nudged me some weeks back at the end of a "Debate" episode in which he, Eddie Gil and myself were panelists.

The topic in that show was whether the Comelec was still capable of overseeing honest and credible elections in the wake of the Supreme Court decision voiding the computerization contract and thereby scrapping automated elections this year.

"I was really scared at one point," Jesli laughingly whispered. "I heard the presidential candidate (Gil) asserting that he was in favor of 'automotive' elections."

* * *

WE can laugh, of course, because Eddie Gil does not have—as the Americans might put it—a snowball's chance in hell of winning the presidency.

Poe is another matter altogether.

Filipinos of a certain social stratum, what a Pinoy Spiro Agnew might call the "nattering nabobs of negativism," make much of Poe's lack of educational attainment, his inability to speak more than one sentence at a time and his unwillingness to expound on his program of government. But do these things matter to his fans and to the mass of voters?

As Max Soliven, interviewed on ANC during a post-mortem of his live interview with "Da King" pointed out, the majority of Filipinos are, like Poe, high school dropouts. Harping on his educational shortcomings might only endear FPJ even more to poor voters.

What seems to disturb many citizens of "Poe country," though, is their idol's inability or refusal to talk at length on his plans. People, especially poor people, are scared about the future. They, more than even the natural critics of Poe, fear the slippery slope this country is straddling. They may like Poe and feel he connects with them and feels their hardship. But if he will not or cannot tell them how he plans to lift the country from this present mess, well, charisma can only take you so far.

* * *

I ALSO recently met, quite by accident, a friend in the movie industry and when we got to talking about politics, she floated the possibility that FPJ's mythic stranglehold on the *masa*'s hearts and minds was just that—myth.

FPJ's last five movies, she pointed out, have all been box-office flops. The last film, "Pakners," which co-starred billiards world champion Efren "Bata" Reyes—a pair of *masa* favorites if there was one—fared dismally at the tills, ranking sixth among the seven films vying in the other year's Metro Manila Filmfest. (The bottom-dweller was "Lapu-lapu" starring Lito Lapid, an administration senatorial candidate.)

If his last films failed to ignite public excitement, said my friend, then it's doubtful if FPJ still commands the same fervor among today's young voters as he does among their parents.

This is where The King of Philippine Movies might be vulnerable—the youth vote. And if he turns them off big-time, then he's in trouble considering that voters between the ages of 18 and 35 make up 60 percent of all voters.

* * *

FIRST-TIME voters, many of whom were born soon after or just before the first Edsa Revolt, have lived all their lives in a democracy—with all its messes, discord and uncertainty.

Being young, they are easily frustrated and quick to despair, while almost desperately holding on to their ideals.

They have also grown up in a world of instant communication, true "media babies," who take their cues on most everything—music, fashion, trends, lifestyles, information and yes, values—from the mass media, including cyber-media.

What they hunger for most of all is "connectivity," being plugged in to everything that is "happening." I don't know if FPJ, with his affinity for the "Lo Waist Gang" school of acting and communication, manages to get across to this media-savvy generation.

He and his handlers may have very good reasons for avoiding televised debates and lengthy, in-depth interviews. But in this age, a candidate either communicates well, or ends up a victim of his own propaganda.

First colored image of Intramuros

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

LAST Wednesday, a delegation of high-level government officials from Spain gathered in the National Museum to open an exhibit of wonderful artifacts showing the long cultural and historic ties between our two countries. From our side the Speaker of the House, the mayor of Manila, and Sen. Edgardo Angara (author of the bill instituting the annual observance of Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day) were present. The "usual suspects" were also around: diplomats, cultural workers, the curious, professional party crashers and two National Artists, Napoleon Abueva and Arturo Luz. Representing the President were the executive secretary and one of her daughters-in-law.

It was a high-powered group that stood patiently in the Tambunting Hall during the customary speeches. That there were no chairs in the room made the speeches seem longer than they actually were.

I resisted the temptation to slip away and come back another day, because of my desire to see the famous 17th-century chest or *baul* whose lid was painted with what is probably the earliest colored image we have of Intramuros. I had only seen this *baul* in photographs until then, and it was a real treat to see the original and study the map closely, looking at details like Chinese sampans and depictions of different types of people. The chest is well preserved but, except for the painting on the lid, quite ordinary.

A wealthy antique collector asked me if the metal locks and fittings depicted the double-headed Hapsburg eagle. I looked at it and looked at him blankly saying they were simple locks.

One can say that looking at artifacts is an exercise in history, or at best like an ink-blot test—one sees what one would like to see even if it is not there.

There were so many other beautiful things on display, some never before seen in the Philippines, like huge ivory carvings, *salakots* embellished with silver, weapons, paintings and, of course, some of the rarest books on the Philippines. Yet to the *baul* I returned three times because of its resonance in contemporary life.

Filipinos today send their "personal effects" home from certain points around the world in what is known as a *balikbayan* box. These sturdy cardboard boxes travel by sea very much in the same way that the famous chest I am raving about traveled from Manila to Acapulco and back in what our textbooks call the Galleon Trade (1565-1815). From Manila these chests were packed with spices and, of course, many goods from China like silk, tortoise shell and ivory. When the boxes came back to Manila they were loaded, we are told, with silver.

Fortunes were made overnight on these boxes. The arrival of a Manila galleon was always an excuse for a fiesta. Well, fortunes were also lost overnight in case of shipwreck or when the galleon was taken by English, Portuguese or Dutch rivals along the way.

I was never interested in the Galleon Trade until I walked in the National Museum Wednesday morning. This was history come alive and people should come and see the exhibit while it lasts.

The clueless asked me why the mayor of Legazpi City in Albay and the mayor of Zumarraga, Spain, birthplace of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, were around. I had to explain that the exhibit and a three-day conference of Filipino and Spanish historians were organized around the figure of the first governor and captain general of the Spanish Philippines. Because of his pioneering efforts, and of course spending his own funds in the exploration and settlement of the Philippines, Legazpi was the only one given the title "*adelantado*" which eluded over a hundred of his successors as governors-general.

At this point, I remembered the Legazpi-Urdaneta monument in front of the Manila Hotel as well as Legazpi's tomb in San Agustin. Fray Francisco de Ortega, writing to the viceroy of Mexico from Manila on June 6, 1573, gave a brief narration of the death, on Aug. 20, 1572, of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi:

"His death was greatly deplored and is so even at the present day, for doubtless his valor and wisdom have been greatly needed. Those who regarded him as wicked in his life will now canonize him as a saint. I believe that he is in glory or on the way to it, for he was a good Christian and if he erred in some things, I believe that he desired to do right, while in some other things he did the best he could.

"He died poor, which is a great evidence of his goodness. That was a cause for great confusion to those who regarded him as very rich, and who were murmuring about, saying that he had a chest of gold and more than 25,000 pesos in to-stones. All that he was found to have on the day of his death was 460 pesos in two little sacks. These he had asked as a loan a few days before. He had also in gold about 120 pesos not counting a large chain and one small one which he had brought from his native land. He had also the wrought silver of his table service..All the rest of this was not worth 500 pesos. This is the whole of the wealth and treasure which he had. Of this fact I am practically an eyewitness, for I was present at his death and at the inventory of his property..."

For a government official to die poor today will invite ridicule rather than praise. History shows how much our lives and thinking have changed from those simple times.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Hobbits and the Pinoy

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

I'M not surprised that 11 Oscars were given to the last of "The Lord of the Rings" film trilogy last Sunday. There's more to the awards than the cinematic effects; we're talking here about a story that has become the 20th-century equivalent of folk epics, one that emerges from and belongs to the global village.

I do worry that people might lose sight of how the trilogy came about, so I did some research and brought together some of the stories behind "The Lord of the Rings," assorted trivia (and the not so trivial) that might interest Filipinos.

To understand the trilogy, we'd have to focus on the hobbit, which is a word now found in English dictionaries but which was actually coined by J. R. R. Tolkien (pronounced Tol-keen). One of Tolkien's biographers, David Doughan, has this amusing story of how the hobbit came about, one to which teachers like myself can relate to. "One day," Doughan writes, "when he (Tolkien) was engaged in the soul-destroying task of marking examination papers, he discovered that one candidate had left one page of an answer-book blank. On this page, moved by who knows what anarchic daemon, he wrote: 'In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.'"

Tolkien eventually wrote a novel with the title (you guessed it) "The Hobbit," published in 1938. Later, he resurrected the hobbits, transforming them into central characters in his trilogy. The first two parts of "The Lord of the Rings" were published in 1954, exactly 50 years ago. So important is that book that the British Post Office released 10 stamps last week to commemorate the event, showing illustrations by Tolkien from the original book.

The trilogy attained cult status during the flower-power era, the late 1960s, in the United States and Europe, as young people tried to carve out a counter-culture. The hobbit was particularly appealing: small human-like creatures, timid but sociable and generally trying to avoid conflict.

The hobbit reached the Philippines by way of an American who opened a coffee shop in the early 1970s on Mabini, just a stone's throw away from Malate church, with "little people" hired as waiters and waitresses and a wall painting inside showing a scene from "The Lord of the Rings," with of course hobbits leading the way.

Hobbit House became a favorite watering hole for the local counter-culture habitués, with folk singers like Freddie Aguilar performing a repertoire that included protest songs. Hobbit House is still on Mabini, and some of the folk singers from the 1970s still perform, including Aguilar, who, I read, collapsed on the stage while performing just last week.

The release of "The Lord of the Rings" films over the last two years, and the awards the trilogy has been reaping, has revived interest in Tolkien's work. I've had occasional comments from friends about how relevant the film is to the Philippine situation, especially around the theme of power.

I think there's potential in using the film for classroom discussions to talk about current events to introduce issues around morality and ethics. All kinds of books and articles have been written about the trilogy, with everyone trying to claim Tolkien as their own, from Catholic theologians (Tolkien was himself Catholic) to American neoconservatives. For example, actor John Rhys-Davies, who played the dwarf Gimli, has been a favorite among pro-Iraq war advocates because of a speech where he claimed that Tolkien's message was that one had to rise up to the challenges of defending civilization or risk losing it. It's this kind of argument that George W. Bush would love.

Others point out that Tolkien, who had seen the horrors of World War I as a soldier, had more pacifist sentiments. In fact, Tolkien's appeal to the counter-culture activists of the 1960s and 1970s came from the way he wrote about power. As exemplified by the ring, power is alluring, and everyone will try to justify that they need the power to do good and transform the world. In the end though, having the ring—as with power—is corrupting. This is exemplified by Gollum, the pathetic creature who once owned the ring and lost it, and spends all his time vacillating in permanent schizophrenia, recognizing power's dangers and yet craving it. I don't want to give the ending to the trilogy except to say it is this dismal creature's scheming and counter-scheming, who will play a decisive role in the end.

Note that the hero in "The Lord of the Rings" is not some tall dashing knight; instead, it is a hobbit, little Frodo, who is suddenly thrust with the responsibility of the ring. If he had his ifs, he would have been happier staying home with his idyllic hobbit existence, but given the task of bringing the ring to a place where it can be destroyed, he is now vulnerable, tempted by the power of the ring.

I can see many of us, as Filipinos, identifying with the hobbit, yearning for a simple life, but often forced into situations not of our own making, deployed to work overseas, or ending up in some government snake pit. And when we do access power, there is always the temptation of becoming its slave, clinging on and refusing to let go, with the excuse that we need that power to do good.

Perhaps our lack of good candidates in elections comes from our being so hobbit-like—decent women and men reluctant to enter politics because, all too often through our history, we have seen how the ring of power engulfs and consumes even the best of people.

* * *

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.net

THEY SAID

All theory

"They have very impressive scholastic achievements; they are good in theory. Unfortunately, except for a few, they do not have the practical experience."
—Federation of Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry vice president Francis Chua on Fernando Poe Jr.'s 19-member team of advisers

Uniqueness

"In a globe that has shrunk, the unique is important. It's the artists who make the unique stronger, who make the Filipino culture and heart."
—Raul Roco on plans of reviving "Balagtasan" when elected President

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No overstatement or hysterical perception

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

OURS must be a helpless nation with hopeless leaders. To even suggest the legalization of *jueteng* is a desperate thought, a loud cry of helplessness, an admission of bankruptcy of ethical consideration.

Where have all the public funds gone? And would the legalization of *jueteng* generate enough money for the government to balance its budget, pay its debts, eradicate poverty? Where is the money from the big government corporations? What happened to all the continuous direct and indirect taxes collected from the people?

Those proposing to legalize *jueteng* should know that it is in the essence of *jueteng* to be illegal. Otherwise, there would not be that much money in this syndicated racket. Or would the government be a racketeer itself by running *jueteng* instead?

Would it then be the real gambling lord in the country? Once *jueteng* is legalized, the numbers game becomes anything but *jueteng*.

Those thinking of legalizing *jueteng* from the business sector should know that *jueteng* is definitely not business. Gambling does not generate wealth but simply sucks this up from some and vomits it on others. This is true of the shameful gambling industry in the country. It does not generate any value added to anything it makes from the many losers to give to a few winners.

Those considering the legalization of *jueteng* from the political sector better take cognizance of the sad truth that there are big gambling syndicates already making surreptitious incursions into the supposedly legal gambling life in the country. It would also be good for them to know how many hotels and other places all over the country are already dedicated to so-called legal gambling. And there are others being now prepared such as in the supposedly wholesome vacation capital of the country, Baguio.

It might be true after all that the Philippines is fast becoming the gambling capital of Asia. This is not an overstatement, nor is it a hysterical perception. Rather, it is the public exhibition of greed and avarice, a confession of exasperation about our pitiful national economic development and condition. Poor Pinoys!

—OSCAR V. CRUZ,
archbishop, Lingayen-Dagupan

PhilEXIM not a bank yet

THIS has reference to the Breaktime column of Conrado Banal III titled, "In the neck of time," last Feb. 17.

We thank Banal for his confidence in the banking experience and expertise of Eduardo Sergio P. Edeza, who was appointed president and chief executive officer of the Trade and Investment Development Corporation of the Philippines (Tidcorp), also known as the Philippine Export-Import Credit Agency (PhilEXIM) by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

We take note of the fact that PhilEXIM, which was the former Philguarantee, is now on better ground with the enhancements made on its financial and operational structures tempered by better management and responsible governance. We credit this growth and development of the corporation to the noteworthy achievements of former president and chief executive officer Joel C. Valdes, together with the cooperation and support of its management and the workforce. Today, through hard work and determination, PhilEXIM can no longer be considered a cellar-dweller but in the league of promising and dynamic institutions of the country, with its liquid financial position, sturdy operational efficiency and good practice of corporate governance.

Moreover, we would like to clarify that while Banal said that the government converted PhilEXIM into a bank, the institution is strictly not yet a bank. However, as early as last year, the corporation began laying the groundwork and planning for the conversion of the institution into a full-service wholesale bank. This undertaking will involve, no less, amendments to the Tidcorp Law, which in turn, require congressional approval. This year, we look forward to more substantial highlights in relation to our conversion plan, and as such, we will need your support and that of the rest of the media industry.

As a former national treasurer and senior executive of Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., Edeza brings with him a wellspring of financial and treasury experience with the corporation, and indeed, in the words of Banal, "it was the best thing that could happen to the institution." More importantly, Edeza's appointment as PhilEXIM president will further strengthen the corporation and expose its mandate to more opportunities and business success.

We look forward to working with our new president and CEO, by the same token that we will continue to look forward to fulfilling our mandate and serving the public through the best ways and means possible.

—IAN A. BRIONES,
vice president,
Office Planning and Corporate Communications,
Philippine Export-Import Credit Agency, 17/F Citibank Tower, Citibank Plaza, Valero Street, Makati City

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(FRIDAY - SATURDAY 9 A.M. - 9 P.M.)

Why DENR's DAO 17 was revoked

WE wish to correct the statement made by Belinda Olivares-Cunanan in her column last Feb. 23. The statement reads as follows:

"(Alvarez's) successor, Elisea Gozun disgustingly revoked DAO 17, which he issued as environment secretary while her confirmation still hung in the Commission on Appointments; recently she issued a watered-down version to satisfy the clamor from the fisherfolk, but they have only gotten more restive about it."

We revoked DENR DAO 17 issued by then Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez simply because the Department of Environment and Natural Resources does not have the jurisdiction to issue it. Simply put, the DENR has no business issuing an administrative order prescribing guidelines in the delineation of municipal waters in the first place. RA 8550, the law that prescribes the 15 kilometers of municipal waters, clearly provides that the "department" it referred to is the Department of Agriculture and not the DENR. This legal position is embodied in Department of Justice Opinion No. 100, series of 2002. That it is the only reason that we have revoked DAO 17 is clearly stated in the revocation order or DENR DAO 7, series of 2003.

Cunanan is again wrong to say that we have recently issued a watered-down version of DAO 17. The recent issuance of an AO (DA DAO 1, series of 2004) regarding delineation of municipal waters, came from the agriculture department and not the DENR. The agriculture department and the DENR are two separate and distinct departments.

—CLARENCE M. DE GUIA,
director, legal service,
Department of Environment and Natural Resources,
Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Fisheries and bribery

IN HIS article "Overexploitation, poverty in fisheries" last Feb. 20, former Trade Undersecretary Ernesto Ordoñez quoted me as saying that "responsible coastal management alienates the illegal fishing operators who corrupt them (the mayors) with large financial contributions."

Allow me to qualify this statement. While it is true that commercial fishers have the capacity to bribe mayors, it cannot be true for smaller illegal fishers. The latter just happen to be more numerous, or some of them may be politically influential in a barangay, which makes many a mayor hesitant to move against them lest they do not support him or her come election time.

Also, let me mention other reasons why many mayors do not implement fishery regulations. One is their lack of appreciation of the value of the fishery resources under their jurisdiction, because unlike land resources, it is not easy to estimate the financial value of fishes that are hidden under the sea. Another is the lack of technical competence in the management of fishery resources because many coastal municipalities do not have a fisheries expert.

—JAIME ESCOBER JR.,
Tambuyog Development Center,
91 V. Luna Rd., Sikatuna Village, QC

Name-calling is unnecessary

MUDSLINGING is the common weapon of politicians against their opponents. But putting words in the mouths of others is also a common practice during the time of elections. And calling a vice-presidential candidate a "political prostitute," is the worst. This is anathema in our culture.

Three scores and ten years ago, a candidate for representative in what once was the Second District of Camarines Sur was called "Santong Bukbukon" or a saintly person plagued by termites by his political opponents at their miting de avance. Yet he won and served for several consecutive terms. His name became an institution and after the end of World War II in 1945, his family dominated politics in what is now the third congressional district of the province until the present time.

Name-calling continues to this day.

We can only pray that the Lord God will forgive them for they know not what they are doing.

—TRINIDAD ESTURAS PETEZA,
JP Rizal Street,
Barangay Camambugan,
4600 Daet, Camarines Norte

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Across the NATION

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

VISAYAS BUREAU
c/o Cebu Daily News
18-15 Escario St., Cebu City
Tel. Nos. (032) 233-0346/233-0349
Fax No. (032) 232-9938
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Gunmen kill Leyte mayor, son in Cebu City

CEBU CITY—The reelectionist mayor of Hindang, Leyte and his son were shot dead by still unidentified assailants in Cebu City at around 5:20 p.m. yesterday.

Mayor Roy Jumao-as, 53, seeking reelection under the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrat party, and his son Jake, 24, were shot in front of an apartment they were renting on Jakosalem Street, Cebu City.

The mayor arrived from Leyte and was fetched by his son at the port area. He just got off a taxi when two armed men immediately fired at them.

Witnesses said the mayor and his son were shot at close range.

The assailants casually boarded a taxi after they shot the mayor and his son, witnesses said.

The mayor's wife, Narcisa, and Jake's wife, Nina, who were inside the apartment when the shooting took place, rushed the two to the Cebu Velez Hospital.

They were declared dead around 5:50 p.m. Jumao-as was a former Cebu City policeman who left the service four years ago and went on to become mayor of his hometown in 2001.

The motive for the killing is still unknown.

Leyte Gov. Remedios Petilla, an ally of the slain mayor, said Jumao-as had been getting death threats but did not know from whom.

Petilla said the killing was politically motivated since Hindang is hotly contested between Jumao-as and his rival, Elpidio Cabal Jr.

Jolene Bulambot and Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

NPA owns up ambush of solon

Rebel leaders say Mindoro legislator refused to pay poll fees

LUCENA CITY—New People's Army (NPA) rebels under the Lucio de Guzman Command claimed responsibility for the ambush on Occidental Mindoro Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato, her aide and three police escorts.

The rebels said the attack was prompted by the lawmaker's refusal to pay permit to campaign fees and for bringing armed escorts in guerrilla zones.

"We had already warned her several times in the past to settle her PTC with us but she kept on ignoring our warning, probably because she was banking on the armed security being provided to her by the police and the military," Higom Maragang, spokesperson of the NPA Lucio de Guzman Command that operates on Mindoro Island, said in a mobile phone interview yesterday.

Maragang chided Sato for her too much dependence on the "false security" being provided by government forces.

"With that line of thinking, she completely ignored the fact that the military and the police were the usual targets of our tactical offensives," he said.

Sato's two convoy vehicles were ambushed by a band of NPA rebels armed with M-16 and M-14 assault rifles in Barangay Alakaak, Sta. Cruz town at about 1:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Police said the congresswoman suffered a slight wound in the head while her police escorts were also hit but only suffered superficial wounds.

Occidental Mindoro board member Randy Ignacio was wounded in the right hand.

Maragang said the ambush was not well-planned.

"The Red fighters just grabbed the opportunity when the convoy passed by. They were not even in an ambush position," he said.

"But just the same, we have made our message clear that politicians who would want to enter our territory to campaign must first secure the PTC or else, they will suffer the consequences," Maragang said.

Communist spokesman Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said the NPA attacked the convoy of Sato after the gubernatorial candidate of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats in Mindoro campaigned inside guerrilla territory with soldiers as escorts.

Rosal also said that Sato was "sentenced for her anti-communist drive in Mindoro and her ill-advised decision to work with (the) blood-thirsty military in the island."

"She (Sato) was really hard-headed. We have already made it clear to all candidates who want to enter our controlled areas not to bring in any military or police personnel with them. I hope she now understands that the NPA is serious in implementing our rules," Rosal said.

He also scoffed at Sato who, he said, had challenged the rebels' strength to repel military offensives against the rebel group in the island.

He said the lawmaker even belittled the NPA's "resolve to go against erring politicians like her" and the military's alleged reign of terror in Mindoro.

POWER emanating from a gun held by a communist rebel in this file photo is the same that drove guerrillas to ambush Representative Sato. PDI FILE PHOTO

"Sato even dared the NPA, which she said was diminishing in number, to fight the military. Now her words only fell back straight to her face," Rosal said.

Sato, Rosal said, was also behind the forming of anti-communist groups in Mindoro like the Bayan Ayaw sa Komunismo (Bako).

Cause-oriented and left-leaning groups in the province denounced Bako as they accused the group of being the intelligence and paramilitary network of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

But Mimaropa police director Chief Supt. Alejandro Lapinid put down Rosal's admission of the ambush.

He said they are still investigating the attack, which police initially described as politically motivated.

"We cannot rely on just Rosal's words alone. The NPA has always been like that. They tend to own up every incident which they think would gain (sic) psychological advantage to them," Lapinid said.

Rosal also criticized Sato when she led the "Kontra Droga Caravan" in the province a few weeks ago.

He said the woman legislator "should be ashamed of herself for deceitfully presenting herself as an anti-illegal drug advocate."

But Lapinid only dismissed Rosal's claims, saying: "It is very unfair to Sato's husband who is widely respected as a businessman. (Rosal's) allegations are all lies."

Lapinid said Sato has been at the forefront of the government's drive against insurgency and illegal drugs.

Maj. Jose Broso, spokesperson of the Southern Luzon Unified Command based in Lucena City, said the NPA ambush was a "diversionary tactics" to take the heat off a military campaign in Paluan town, which the military said was the stronghold of guerrillas in Southern Tagalog.

Magarang, however, belittled the military operation.

"The enemies have done nothing but to destroy our little ordnance factory, nothing more," he said.

In Congress, Sato's colleagues condemned the ambush and called on the Army to step up the fight against the guerrillas. *Delfin Mallari Jr. and Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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5. Angeles City - McArthur Highway, Brgy. Sto. Domingo *(near Angeles City arch)*
6. Pampanga - Brgy. San Matias, Sto. Tomas *(along McArthur Highway)*
7. Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija - Central Transport Terminal
8. San Jose City, Nueva Ecija - Maharlika Highway, Malasin *(across Jollibee)*
9. Olongapo City - Old Cabalan
10. Santiago City, Isabela - Callao West *(beside Callao Bridge)*
11. Malolos, Bulacan - McArthur Highway, Ginhawa *(near cockpit)*

SOUTH LUZON
1. Batangas City - Brgy. Cuta *(near new Public Market)*
2. Lucena City - M.L. Tagarao St., Iyam *(near Public School)*
3. Naga City - Brgy. Triangulo, Concepcion Pequena, Maharlika Highway
4. Daraga/Legazpi - Rizal corner Regidor St., Daraga, Albay
5. San Pablo City - Maharlika Highway, Brgy. San Roque
6. GMA, Cavite - Governors Drive corner Congressional Avenue

Effective March 4, 2004

VISAYAS
1. Cebu City - Legaspi corner D. Jakosalem Sts. *(near Cebu Eastern College)*
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4. Tacloban City - Real Street
5. Roxas City - Roxas Avenue *(near Immaculate Conception Church)*
6. Dumaguete City - Sibulan, Negros Oriental *(near Sibulan Airport)*

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ANTICIPATION

TOOTS SOBERANO PDI PHOTO

Two boys sit out the day at the Ortega Sports Complex in San Fernando City after taking a break from their daily routine of peddling in the streets to have a glimpse of the woman whose face is on the sticker pasted on their pail. Ms Macapagal, however, failed to show up at the complex.

N. Vizcaya council asks phone firms to add guards at cell sites, relay towers

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya —Members of the provincial peace and order council (PPOC) asked telecommunications companies operating in the province to adopt security measures for their relay facilities amid concerns that these are prone to attacks by guerrillas and vandals.

In a resolution, the PPOC asked Digital Communications Inc. (Digitel) and mobile phone network carriers Smart, Globe and Sun Cellular not to depend solely on the police and village guards for the security of their installations.

Council members noted the absence of personnel guarding the firms' communications towers, which are commonly located in remote areas, and the supposed lack of maintenance measures on these facilities.

Added concern

The PPOC said the absence of security personnel has become an added concern for the police.

The telecommunications towers and relay facilities could easily become targets of sabotage, arson and vandalism, the council said.

Peter Dumelod, area manager for Digitel, a sister company of Sun Cellular, said he has sent the PPOC resolution to the Metro Manila office of Alcatel, the company commissioned by the firm for its cellular phone service.

"While we expect that in the future, the management and supervision of these facilities would be handed over to us (Digitel), however, there has not yet been any formal turnover," Dumelod said.

He said Sun Cellular has five cell sites in the province.

Security force

James Tajon, Smart area supervisor, said the company has always maintained its security force in each of the company's nine cell sites in the province through a private security agency.

Officials of Globe Telecoms Inc. could not be immediately reached for comment. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Genetic crop toxin found in tribal folk's blood

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The results of a preliminary study conducted by a Norwegian scientist on blood samples taken last year from 38 tribal residents of Sitio Kalyong in Barangay Landan, Polomolok town in South Cotabato yielded positive of the *Bucillus Thuringiensis* (Bt) toxin.

But Dr. Terje Traavik, a genetic engineer for about 25 years, clarified that "the results of the preliminary tests are not yet conclusive."

He asked residents not to be misled by the claims made by the proponents of gene-altered crops.

Unreliable

He said genetic engineering is not reliable and unpredictable.

"There's no literature or scientific studies that could prove GMO safeness to human health and environment," he said.

On July 25 last year, at least 51 residents living within the 100-meter radius of the Bt-corn field test area of multinational seed giant Monsanto Philippines complained of headache, flu, nausea, fatigue and skin allergies prompting them to seek assistance from the Justice and Peace Desk of the Diocese of Marbel.

Residents claimed that they experienced such illnesses during the two-week flowering stage of Bt-corn planted by Monsanto in the area.

In August last year, a medical mission was spearheaded by the Justice and Peace Desk with the help of the local health officials in South Cotabato to determine the causes of the disease.

"Antibodies in the blood samples taken showed that these people have been exposed to the Bt toxin," Traavik said.

Exposure

The Norwegian genetic engineer said the tribal people were exposed to the Bt toxin for months but whether that was the cause of their diseases has yet to be determined.

But Samuel Malayon, one of those who underwent the medical tests, told reporters that it was the first time the villagers were hit by such kinds of unusual illnesses.

Traavik, who was then conducting an independent research on Bt-corn in South Cotabato, heard about the incident and voluntarily offered his expertise in analyzing the blood samples of the affected residents.

On Oct. 12 last year, the specimens were sent to Traavik's laboratory at the University of Tromso in Norway.

Traavik, through the help of the Justice and Peace Desk and other groups opposing GMOs, called for a press conference here on Wednesday morning where he revealed the results of his tests. *Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Voters urged to reject bets who violate election laws

By Romy G. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—Provincial poll supervisor Rogelio Benjamin, frustrated by the flagrant violation of the law on the placement of campaign materials, has called on voters to use the "language of the ballot" against these candidates.

Benjamin lamented that the Commission on Elections (Comelec) has been plagued with violations of rules on the posting of campaign materials.

Under the election code, candidates are supposed to place their campaign materials only in areas designated by the Comelec.

With the poll body's limited manpower, Benjamin said the Comelec could not afford to focus its energy only in removing the illegally placed campaign materials.

Otherwise, he added, Comelec personnel could no longer effectively perform their more important functions.

"You can just imagine after you remove the posters, the following day another poster is posted. It is consuming the time of the Comelec personnel," Benjamin said.

"I think the voters should show some kind of an indignation over these candidates through the language of their ballots," Benjamin said.

He said the people should exercise their sovereign power in preventing candidates who violated the law from winning in the elections.

Benjamin said winners in the senatorial race are expected to legislate while the winner of the presidential race is presumed to implement the laws.

"How can they effectively perform their tasks, when they cannot even follow a simple election regulation? It is a mockery," Benjamin said.

Benjamin earlier directed the Department of Public Works and Highways in Negros Oriental to stop their workers from wearing T-shirts, jackets and hats that bore the name of President Macapagal-Arroyo who is seeking a full six-year term.

He said government workers were barred from campaigning. But to wear such an attire could be considered illegal because the President is a candidate.

He also requested the DPWH to remove billboards of the President that announce her project "Kalsada Natin Alagaan (We should take care of our roads)."

Benjamin's directive had been forwarded to the DPWH office in Cebu City.

ROUNDUP

Bridge repaired

BAGUIO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the reconstruction of the Pasil Bridge in upper Kalinga that collapsed on Feb. 8 before it could be inaugurated. Ms Macapagal said she was assured by the Department of Public Works and Highways that the project's foreign consultants would shoulder the costs of rebuilding the bridge, upper Kalinga's only link to the outside world. The bridge was part of her flagship programs. "We have been told that the consultants would replace the damaged materials worth about P100 million," she said. The collapse of the 90-meter suspension-type bridge again isolated the towns of Tinglayan, Lubuagan, Pasil and Balbalan and added to the economic woes of upper Kalinga. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Trader killed

BATANGAS CITY—Unidentified armed men shot dead a businessman-cockfighting aficionado in Barangay Sta. Rita Kalsada on Feb. 22. The victim, Nicanor Agon, 47, a resident of Barangay Tinga Itaas, of this city, was hit in different parts of the body, police said. Agon had just been to the Sta. Rita Sportsville cockpit arena and was aboard his Mitsubishi Pajero when the suspects on board a red car with no license plate shot him. The suspects fled after the killing. Agon was rushed to the Golden Gate Hospital but died during treatment. Police still have no idea about the motive for the killing. *Mel Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Trader sues cop

BATANGAS CITY—Businesswoman Nancy Macatangay, 38, of this city, has filed charges of grave misconduct, grave threats and physical injury against SPO3 Mario Panaligan of this city's police force. Macatangay said she parked her car at the car park in front of the city hall when Panaligan allegedly shouted obscenities at her and ordered her to remove her car from the area. When she asked why, he allegedly slapped her, grabbed her cell phone and left. When she complained to the police, she said she came face to face with Panaligan who cocked his gun at her face and threatened to shoot her if she pressed charges. Macatangay went to the provincial police office instead. *Mel Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Driver killer nabbed

SINILOAN, Laguna—Police have arrested the killer of a tricycle driver in this city after several months of manhunt. Richard Plantilla, alias Botong, 23, a farmer of Barangay Magsaysay, is the most wanted person in the town, police said. His victim was identified as Nelson Juvillo, 25, of Poblacion 1, Real, Quezon. The case has been forwarded to the Regional Trial Court 4th Judicial Region Branch 33 here. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

2 rebels killed

LEGAZPI CITY—Two suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed in a 30-minute encounter with government troopers in Barangay Barihay, San Andres, Catanduanes, on Friday. A military report said the soldiers were conducting operations in the area when they encountered 10 guerrillas. The slain rebels were brought to the municipal police station for identification. The soldiers reportedly recovered two M-16 rifles and anti-government documents from the rebels *Joyce Mejillano, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Ex-cop, friend draw life term for murder

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—A Regional Trial Court (RTC) sentenced to life in prison a former policeman and his friend for the murder of a neighbor four years ago.

Judge Olegario Sarmiento found PO2 Engelberto Durano and Rodulfo Robles guilty of murder for the gun death of Rogelio Bacalso on Dec. 22, 2000 in his house in Barangay Busay this city.

The court also ordered the two to indemnify the family of Bacalso P220,000 in moral and exemplary damages and in attorney's fees.

In his 13-page decision, Sarmiento did not hand down the death penalty on the two because the prosecution failed to present proof that the killing was premeditated.

Juliet Bacalso, the victim's wife, cried while members of the Crusade Against Violence clapped their hands after the verdict was read in open court.

Village's lone midwife arrested by soldiers

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Parista, a village of more than 500 families in Lupao, Nueva Ecija, has lost its only midwife.

The villages *comadrona*, Teresita Abellera, 52, was suspected of being the secretary of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Lupao.

She has been absent in the village since Feb. 8 when soldiers from the 71st Infantry Battalion arrested her on murder charges.

Even as she faced arrest, her eldest daughter Marlyn said Abellera put duty above fear for her life.

"She insisted to stay until she helped deliver the baby (of a neighbor) and if a barangay official accompanied her to the precinct," Marlyn, 26, told reporters here.

The soldiers, she said, arrived at 7 p.m. and wanted to immediately take her 52-year-old mother.

Abellera asked the soldiers to wait, as she wanted to ensure the safety of her patient.

Marlyn said at least 20 soldiers surrounded the house where her mother was delivering a baby. She said the baby's mother bled profusely during the delivery when she saw the heavily armed soldiers.

Abellera, according to her daughter, was made to sign at least three sheets of paper.

Beatriz Perido of the human rights group Karapatan-Nueva Ecija said the midwife did not know the content of those documents.

"She said she was not given the chance to read the documents and that she was not given her eyeglasses so she could read," Perido said.

She said soldiers reprimanded the police for not arresting Abellera despite a complaint for the murder of Honorio Gonzaga in June 2002.

In a fact sheet on Abellera's case, Karapatan said the midwife, who is the municipal coordinator of the party-list Bayan Muna, was accused of being in the team of New People's Army rebels that killed Gonzaga for alleged rape, murder and theft.

But policemen, Perido said, told the soldiers they had no case against Abellera.

"While the complaint surprised us, her inclusion in the military's order of battle and the availability of the reward money for her arrest shocked us most," Perido said.

The military, through Col. Jovenal Narcise, announced her capture on Feb. 10.

Abellera's co-accused, a certain Anging Castillo, is at large.

Because there was no separate jail for women detainees in Lupao, police transferred Abellera to the San Jose City jail in Nueva Ecija. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

NPA attack in gold rush site kills 13-yr-old girl

DAVAO CITY—New People's Army (NPA) rebels stormed a military detachment on Mt. Diwata in Monkayo, Compostela Valley early morning yesterday, killing a 13-year-old girl and wounding at least five people, including a three-year-old girl and two soldiers.

Lt. Col. Maximo Caro, commander of the Army's 36th Infantry Battalion based in the said town, said some 100 rebels, led by a Commander Jomar of the NPA's Front Committee 20, attacked the Pag-asa detachment at around 5:30 a.m.

Only six soldiers were at the outpost during the attack, timed at the celebration of Miners Day in Barangay Mt. Diwata.

The area is a known gold mining site which was disputed by small scale miners and mining corporations that have laid claim to gold-rich areas on Mt. Diwata.

Outnumbered

Caro said the soldiers were outnumbered when the guerrillas attacked, but they fought back and engaged the rebels in a 45-minute gun battle.

Killed was Hannah Joy Villaber, a student of the Mt. Diwata National High School while the wounded civilians were identified as Marina Murable, 3, Lolong Hanaguit and village guard Dante Perez.

Villaber, whose family lives near the detachment, was hit by stray bullets in the neck and body.

The wounded soldiers were identified as Pfc. Dael Murable, Marina's father, and Pfc. Benzar Blahim.

"The other victims were only slightly wounded," Caro said.

"It was very unfortunate that this incident happened today even as we celebrate the Miners Day," Barangay Captain Franco Tito said.

Rampage

Lt. Col. Agane Adriatico, military spokesperson for Southeastern Mindanao, said the rebels have been on a rampage and have not put distinction between civilian and military targets.

On Sunday, a member of the 73rd Infantry Battalion based here was killed in an ambush at Barangay Maal-al in Paquibato District.

Lt. Col. Erick Parayno, commander of the Army's 73rd IB, said a team of soldiers was checking on the reported presence of armed men in the village when they were fired upon.

A 15-minute gunfight ensued, leaving a soldier dead. Parayno said civilians claimed they saw the retreating rebels bury two companions. *Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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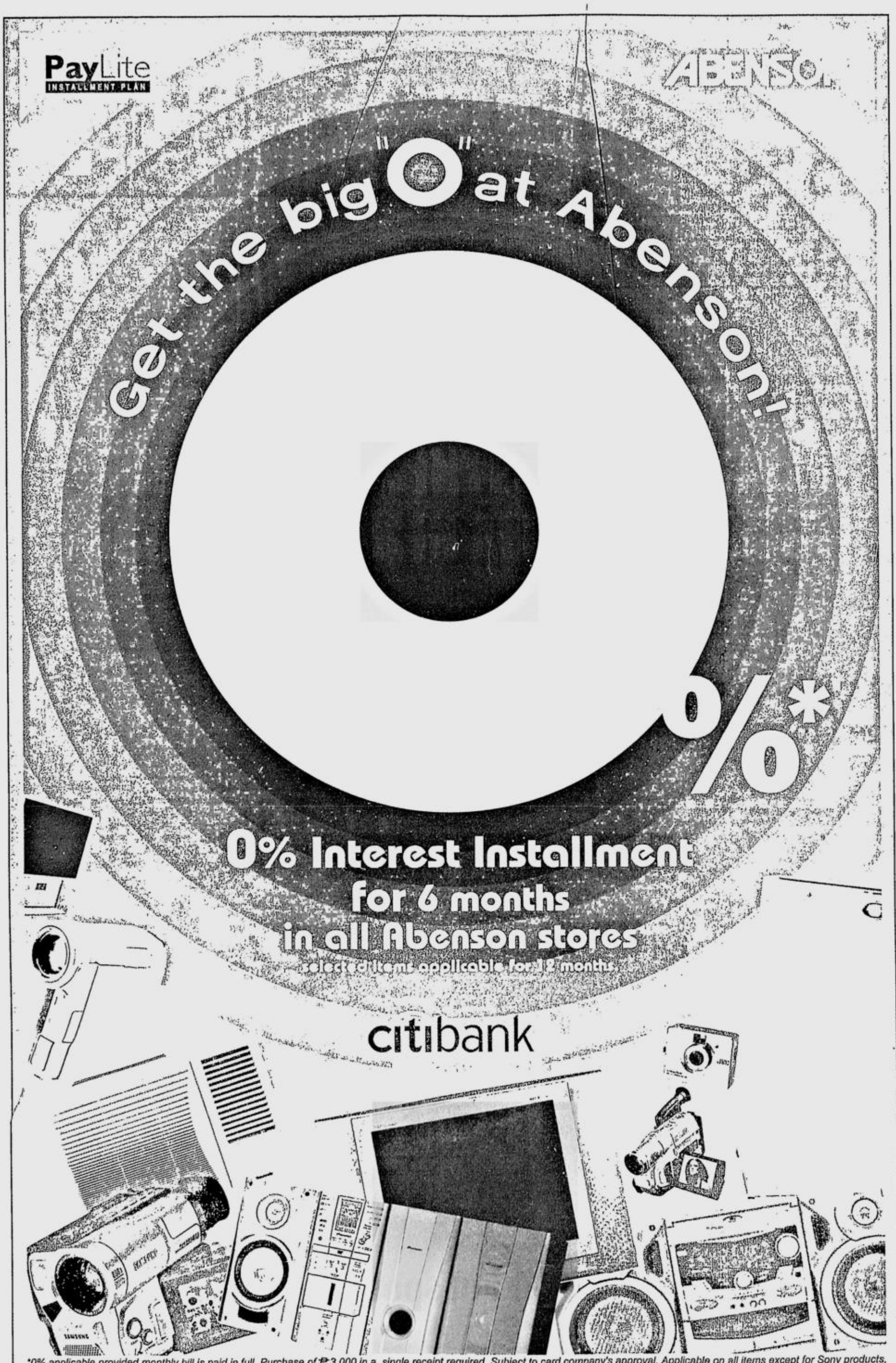

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BODY bags are in the custody of Coast Guard personnel after two more bodies were recovered inside the gutted SuperFerry 14. 134 passengers are still missing. ERIK ARAZAS

THE SEARCH continues as a Coast Guard team tries to make its way inside the boat which now lies off Mariveles in Bataan. ERIK ARAZAS

DOTC rules out sabotage in SuperFerry 14 fire

From page A1

Gosingan added that the two female bodies found the other day had been identified as Cristy Rubico, 24, and Clynn Paculba, 16. Rubico was identified by her husband Noel and Paculba by her mother Ritzel. The body of a male victim found with them remains unidentified.

One of the bodies found yesterday was identified as that of Marilou Pamonag, 39. She was identified by her daughter.

PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo said the bodies of the passengers retrieved from the ferry would be autopsied by the Philippine National Police.

No twisted metal

Despite statements by the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group that one of its members had posed as a passenger and planted the bomb that caused the blaze, the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) found no indication to support the claim.

"So far there is nothing in our investigation that would connect the incident to terrorism," DOTC Secretary Leandro Mendoza told reporters. "Based on our initial investigation, the terror or sabotage angle is not too strong."

He said an explosion in the boiler room or a defective gas tank could have caused the fire that gutted the 10,192-ton ferry.

The DOTC findings came after the Maritime Industry Authority or Marina said it was considering sabotage a strong angle in the explosion.

"If the incident was caused by explosives then it would leave traces or there would have been evidence of twisted metal or shrapnel. But so far there is none," Mendoza explained.

The transport chief said that aside from the board of marine inquiry that he convened, he also organized a team of forensic experts and arson investigators to help determine the cause of fire, which was earlier blamed on faulty electric wiring.

According to Mendoza, investigating teams have so far scoured 70 percent of SuperFerry 14. He hoped that probers could inspect even the submerged portion of the ship.

Thorough inspection

The DOTC chief has also ordered maritime authorities to inspect thoroughly the entire fleet of WG&A Philippines which is owned by the Aboitiz Transport System Corp.

WG&A operated 23 vessels as of end-2003. The other day, the listed firm told the stock exchange that it would buy another vessel worth $4.5 million. The company owns five other ships under the Cebu Ferries Corp.

"I have ordered the inspecting teams of the Coast Guard and Marina to inspect all ships of Aboitiz," said Mendoza. He said the inspection was similar to the grounding of airplanes that usually followed a plane crash.

In May 2003, SuperFerry 12 collided with another vessel and killed more than 60 people. The collision was blamed on the wooden-hulled vessel MV San Nicolas.

Families help in search

Mendoza said the inspection of the WG&A fleet was important, especially if investigators could conclude that the fire was caused by a faulty system or lapses in safety procedures. This means that the shipping company as well as maritime authorities could face administrative sanction and criminal liability.

Mendoza said families of the missing passengers were helping authorities in their search. The government assured them that it would not stop looking "until all missing passengers have been accounted for."

"The Coast Guard will fly a chopper in the vicinities of Corregidor and neighboring areas. We would also be distributing leaflets in the hope that there were passengers who were rescued by fisherfolks," said Mendoza.

According to Edward Leyco, whose mother Leonor remains unaccounted for, some relatives of the passengers would continue scouring the areas around Manila Bay to check if any of the missing had ended up there.

"I believe there are still survivors," Leyco told the INQUIRER yesterday before he and 23 other relatives of the missing boarded BRP 002 Edsa II for Cavite. Other relatives went to Mariveles to observe the operations aboard SuperFerry 14.

Leyco said that with the help of the PCG, relatives of the passengers would distribute pictures to help locate the missing.

WG&A appeals

The shipping company has appealed to volunteers, rescue teams and survivors of the SuperFerry 14 fire to contact WG&A for information on those who had gone home after leaving the ship and fishing boats and failed to go through the official process.

Gina Virtusio, PR and corporate communications manager of WG&A Philippines, also appealed to municipalities, barangays and hospitals in the coastal towns of Batangas, Cavite and Mariveles Bataan, to inform them if any survivors might be in their vicinity.

With reports from AP, AFP

Kuratong case back to SC; Lacson cries harassment

From page A1

against him and 33 others.

The OSG also asked the high court to order the re-raffle of the case to another court and have that court immediately issue arrest warrants against the accused.

The case stemmed from the alleged rubout of 11 suspected members of a bank robbery syndicate on Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City on May 18, 1995. Lacson, then a chief superintendent, was head of the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission's Task Force Habagat.

Lacson said the move was part of a pattern of harassment against President Macapagal-Arroyo's political foes.

"I have suspected that since the start of the disqualification case against Fernando Poe Jr., when they prepared the petition for certiorari. It seems that, yes, there is a pattern," Lacson told reporters in Nueva Vizcaya.

"If FPJ would have been disqualified, I would be the focus of these problems," he said.

Suffered long enough

Lacson said he was hoping the Supreme Court would be as independent in deciding on the justice department's petition for certiorari as when it junked the disqualification case against Poe.

"We've suffered long enough, myself and the other police officers similarly situated. We have yet to have peace of mind for the past nine years," Lacson said.

Malacañang denied that it was behind the move to revive the case to ease Lacson out of the presidential race.

"The resurrection of the Kuratong Baleleng case will not in any way benefit President Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for reelection," Michael Defensor, Ms Macapagal's campaign spokesperson, said.

"We have nothing to gain but everything to lose with regard to the reviving of the Kuratong case because this, as even the opposition claims, might eventually lead to the merger of Ping (Lacson) and Poe," Defensor said.

Assault on integrity

In a petition for mandamus and certiorari, Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo said Yadao's decision to junk the charges against Lacson and the other accused was an "assault" on the integrity of the entire judiciary.

"(Yadao) exhibited no qualms in resorting to acts that teeter on the brink of felonies such as falsification of public documents, libel and knowingly rendering an unjust judgment to achieve the nefarious objective of effecting a judicial execution of the truth that lies shallow beneath the great ado over probable cause," Benipayo said.

Yadao dismissed the case on Nov. 13, 2003 due to lack of probable cause. The prosecution filed a motion for reconsideration, claiming that its evidence were even enough for a trial, but Yadao dismissed the appeal.

"(Yadao) gravely abused the trust reposed upon her as a neutral dispenser of justice. What is worse is that the manner in which this was committed was a reprehensible breach of the Code of Judicial Conduct constituting no less than a veritable assault upon the reputation for integrity of the entire Philippine Judiciary and aggravated by the fact that the assault emanated from within its own ranks," Benipayo said.

Remove jurisdiction

He asked the high court to remove Yadao's jurisdiction over the case and order Executive Judge Natividad Dizon of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court to conduct a re-raffle to another heinous crimes court or to a family court since two of the victims were minors.

Benipayo said the tribunal should also "command" Yadao to immediately transmit the entire records of the case for the re-raffle, "on account of her manifest bias and partiality and compulsory disqualification."

Overwhelming evidence

"The damage has been done. Delay has been achieved at the expense of public confidence in the judiciary. Giving due course to the petition may well restore some of this lost faith but any further delay in the prosecution of this case will likely result in irreversible damage to the State's case (and the private offended parties claims)," he added.

Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño said that once the high court sets aside Yadao's ruling, she should immediately inhibit herself, adding that her "abuse of discretion" is the legal basis for the government's appeal.

"We have a strong case. We believe that we have overwhelming evidence to warrant the issuance of warrants of arrest. We can even go to trial," he added.

Zuño denied that the government was harassing Lacson with the filing of the case, adding that it has languished since the time of the Estrada administration.

"Even before the election, the Kuratong case was already there. Even during the time of (former President Joseph) Estrada," he said.

No probable cause

In her Nov. 13 decision, Yadao threw out the charges against Lacson and his co-accused after she granted the motions filed by the defense for the determination of probable cause. A probable cause would have been the basis for the issuance of warrants for the arrest of Lacson and his co-accused.

"After a thorough and searching examination of the evidence submitted by the prosecutors, as well as what appears in the voluminous record of the cases, this court finds no probable cause exists for the issuance of the warrants of arrest against any or all of the accused, and that the DOJ panel of prosecutors, in evaluating the evidence before it committed a manifest error constituting grave abuse of discretion and exhibited its prejudice," Yadao said.

But government lawyers insisted that there was probable cause against the accused and that Yadao violated the rules on the determination of probable cause when she adopted her own rules of procedure.

"She acted as a prosecutor in the determination of probable cause for the issuance of arrest warrants and yet, when issuing her finding on such determination, she converted herself into a trial court judge deciding a criminal case," the justice department said in its motion for reconsideration before the Quezon City court.

"She lost sight of the doctrine of probable cause and equated it with the requirement of moral certainty for the conviction of the accused. She demanded the highest degree of evidence in determining probable cause, when all that was required was for her to apply an average man's standard of reasonable belief," it added.

Multiple gunshot wounds

The justice department noted that forensic evidence showed that no shoot-out happened when the 11 suspected Kuratong Baleleng members were killed on Commonwealth Avenue in 1995.

The PNP medico-legal reports of the incidents revealed that all the victims had multiple gunshot wounds and abrasions on the wrist area "evidently indicating that no shoot-out occurred as their hands were tied when they were killed," the justice department said.

Paraffin tests on the victims also showed that their hands were negative for powder burns, it added.

"In the case at bar, are 11 medico-legal reports showing ligature marks on the wrist of the victims, negative powder burns on all victims, fatal head wounds caused by gunshots including one head wound with powder burn tattooing indicating close range fire—insufficient for purposes of corpus delicti to anyone, be they lawman or lawyer, except for Judge Yadao?" the justice department asked.

"If the events of May 18, 2003 were truly a running gun battle between the accused and the victims who were both on board their respective vehicles, the exchange of fire could not possibly result in fatal wounds inflicted on all the victims and close-range firing should have been impossible under the circumstances," the justice department said.

"Indeed, it is hornbook law that physical evidence, as the foregoing, speaks more eloquently than a hundred witnesses," it added.

Two of the victims—Sherwin Abalora and Meleubren Soronda—were minors when they were killed. Their birth certificates showed that Abalora was 17 years old at the time while Soronda was 14, the justice department said.

Gov't pushes peace pacts in 500 hot spots

From page A1

would be launched in Metro Manila where there are 12 hot spots based on the Philippine National Police's list issued last Dec. 4.

But he said the choice of Metro Manila as the launching pad of the campaign should not be interpreted to mean that the metropolis was the most dangerous election area in the country.

Police said the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao was still the biggest concern of authorities because the region had at least 78 private armed groups in the employ of politicians.

There are at least 114 private armies nationwide, according to the PNP.

From Metro Manila, Lina said covenants would be pursued in other election hot spots in the provinces where the chances of violence escalating as a result of the elections were higher.

As of Feb. 29, there were 498 "election areas of concern" in the country, said Director Avelino Razon Jr., police director for operations.

Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur, Maguindao and Sulu have the most hot spots with at least 54. There are at least 46 in Sarangani, South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Lanao del Norte, and Sultan Kudarat.

Natural suspect

The current list does not yet include Sta. Cruz town in Occidental Mindoro a where candidate for governor, Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato, was ambushed on Wednesday.

Gov. Jose Villarosa, Sato's political opponent, said he was a natural suspect. But the New People's Army claimed responsibility for the ambush. *(Story on Page A17.)*

NPA presence is one of the three criteria for an area to be classified as an election hot spot. Intense political rivalry and a history of violence are the two other criteria.

Early last month, two men in a motorcycle ambushed and killed Naujan (Mindoro Oriental) Vice Mayor Juvy Magsino and Bayan Muna party-list group coordinator Leima Fortu.

Bayan Muna blamed the military for the killing, but President Macapagal-Arroyo said the killing had been solved, the suspects were being hunted and the military had nothing to do with it.

Days later, suspected communist guerrillas failed in an assassination attempt on the governor of Bohol.

Commitments for peace

PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. began his own peace covenants between warring politicians following the Jan. 4 Maguindanao gym explosion that killed 22 people and injured 80 others.

Part of Ebdane's directive for the May elections was for regional and provincial commanders to seek similar commitments in their areas, according to Razon.

Ebdane's visits got the PNP "commitments for peace" from political leaders of Cotabato, Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu and Basilan.

The provincial politicians promised that they would police their ranks to prevent any clashes.

"They promised that they will abide by the law, that they will not start any trouble," said Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao, police information officer, in an earlier interview.

Grandma gives birth to 2 grandchildren

From page A1

world," Thoms said in a telephone interview. She added that the pregnancy was pretty easy, even though it had been about 28 years since she last gave birth.

Hospital officials said they did not know whether there were other cases of a surrogate mother giving birth to her own grandchildren.

More exciting

Thoms volunteered for the role on behalf of her son Shawn Reed and his wife Traci, who could not give birth because of scarring in her uterus.

Shawn and Traci Reed underwent an in-vitro fertilization procedure in San Antonio. A doctor told them it would be best to find a family member to serve as a surrogate mother in order to avoid legal complications over custody of the children.

Thoms, a pilot, skydiver and scuba diver, stepped forward.

"This pregnancy was much more exciting than those adventures," she said.

The twin girls, Sydney and Morgan, are still in the hospital but are in good health.

Thoms said she could not wait to play with the grandchildren to whom she had given birth. *Reuters*

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METRO

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

SUPERLOTTO 6/49 1 8 19 25 42 45

Brace for meatless weekend, people warned

By Christine Gaylican

BRACE yourselves for a meatless weekend as meat dealers and vendors yesterday announced that they would be taking to the streets, cutting the supply of pork to Metro Manila wet markets.

The newly formed Meat and Hog Dealers Associations of the Philippines said that starting today until Sunday, they would stop supplying pork to the metropolis to protest the escalating farmgate prices of hogs.

The live weight price of pigs rose from P82 to P93 per kilo.

According to Dennis Alcoreza, who represents the group of meat dealers, they arrived at the decision after a five-hour meeting on Wednesday.

He said that the members have all agreed that they could no longer cope with the additional costs arising from the high farmgate price of pigs.

Alcoreza also announced that the operators of slaughterhouses would also cease operations over the weekend.

Alcoreza, who operates the slaughterhouse in Vitas, Tondo said he and the other members, supply over 7,000 heads of pigs a day to markets around the metropolis and in parts of Bulacan, Tagaytay and Batangas.

Joel Vicmudo, vice president of the meat dealers association, also called on the Department of Agriculture and Department of Trade and Industry to resolve the issue for, if left unchecked, it would be the consumers who would inevitably suffer.

But the Department of Agriculture has played down the impact of the planned protest and claimed that the group could only account for 10 percent of the total meat supplied to Metro Manila wet markets.

According to the National Federation of Hog Raisers, the sudden increase in the cost of meat was due to the increasing price of feeds and the decrease in production by both commercial and backyard raisers.

Albert Lim, federation president, told the INQUIRER that the cost of production in raising pigs rose by 70 percent because of the high cost of feed ingredients like corn, soybean meal and coconut oil.

Lim said that since January, some hog raisers have cut down their production because they were operating at a loss last year.

"We were selling at P60 per kilogram at the farmgate last year," said Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr. "This situation dissuaded some raisers from producing. It may take another six months before we could rebuild production."

Lorenzo added that the agency would still try to conduct a multi-sectoral dialogue with both the hog raisers and meat dealers groups.

Transport sector unfazed by Palace threat

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

PUBLIC transport operators and drivers who joined last Monday's protest remain unfazed despite the suspension of their franchise to operate.

Most are even looking forward to the wider, potentially crippling strike on March 8.

"The government should look into the transport sector's concerns and not resort to threats," PDCO-ACTO president Efren De Luna said in Filipino.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board has suspended the franchises of five Metro Manila jeepney operators for 30 days and threatened to do the same to 300 others suspected of abandoning their routes during Monday's strike.

De Luna told the INQUIRER that the suspension was "baseless." He said that the ones being punished are the operators, while it was the jeepney drivers who went on strike.

Medardo Roda, honorary chair of the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide, also said that they would question the suspension, which punished drivers who were just practicing their "right to air their concerns."

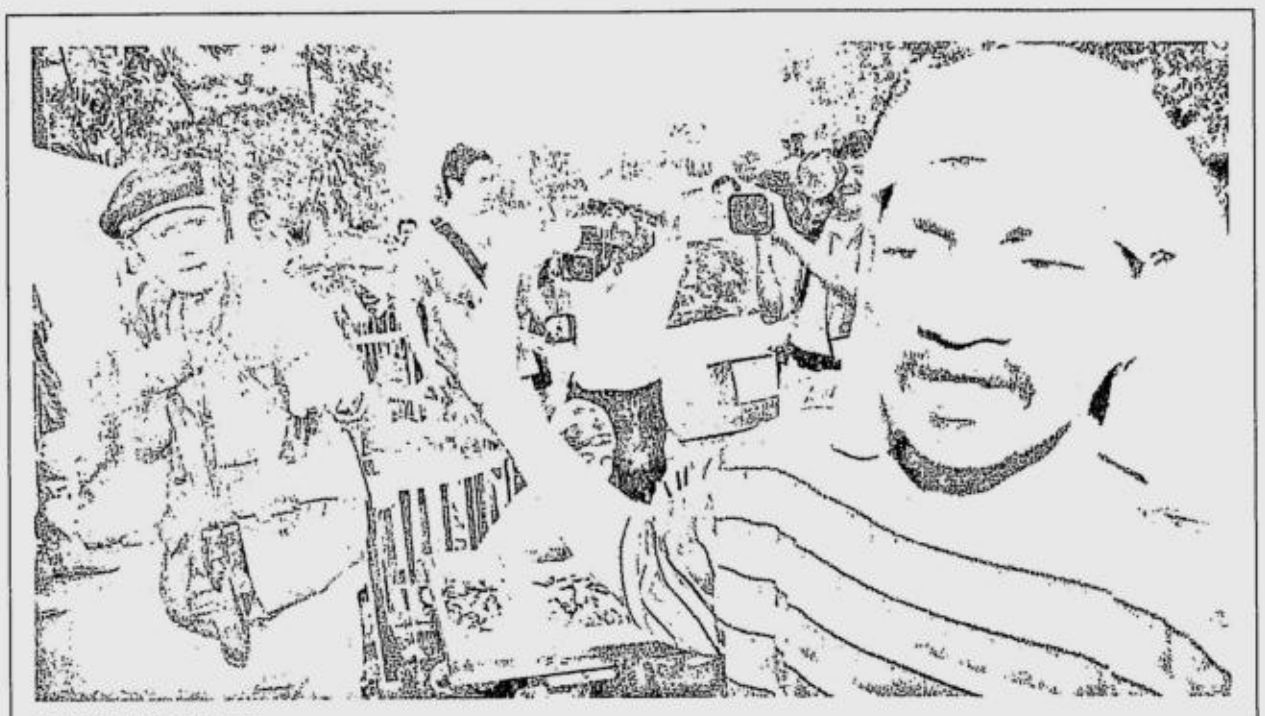
"(The threat of suspension) only shows that the government is not sincere in addressing the transport sector's concerns," Piston president Mar Garvida added.

He added that the drivers would not be intimidated by these threats from the government.

Despite the suspension of franchises, the March 8 nationwide strike would still push through, De Luna said.

Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza today is set to meet with transport group leaders to head off the nationwide strike.

The drivers have been pushing for a P1 provisional fare increase while waiting for the LTFRB's action on their P2 fare increase petition. Some groups are also fighting for a rollback in oil prices.



STREETFIGHTERS
MANG Manuel brushes off an old man who wants to be president (left). Tatang Luis almost figured in a brawl near the Supreme Court building just before the high tribunal decided on the citizenship issue of another presidential aspirant, Fernando Poe Jr. The old man said that he too has issues which he would like the Supreme Court to resolve. ERIK ARAZAS

Tuadles widow forgives her husband's killer

"YOU HAVE to forgive him. Bitterness is a burden in life."

After the widow of a professional basketball player forgave her husband's killer, she also told him to "straighten out his life" now that he has been released from jail.

"The best thing that he can do is to straighten out his life, not to let his temper get in the way," said Suzette Tuadles of Albert "Ambet" Antonio, who was freed on Wednesday after he shot and killed Arnulfo Tuadles over a heated card game eight years ago.

"I hope he will really change for the better so that he and his children can get back on their feet," said Tuadles in an interview over GMA Network radio station dzBB from her residence in the United States.

Following her husband's death, Suzette said she strived hard to find a job in the US to pay for the education of their three children.

She said she has forgiven Antonio a long time ago and has talked to him, but added that her children have yet to meet their father's killer.

Antonio, a former official of the Games and Amusement Board who is also a close friend of jailed ex-president Joseph Estrada, was released on parole Wednesday for his "excellent conduct." He has served seven of his 14-year sentence.

According to Supt. Venancio Tesoro of the National Bilibid Prisons, Antonio was "a cut above the rest" and a "model inmate."

Antonio assisted NBP officials in "smoothing the feathers of a troubled prison community," Tesoro said in a phone interview. "I expect headaches from these high-profile cases, but here comes a fellow (Antonio) who practically helped do our work for us." *Margaux Ortiz, Inq-7*

Retrenched workers seek to stop NEA abolition

By Tina Santos

HUNDREDS of employees of the National Electrification Administration are set to go to court to stop the abolition of the government-owned corporation.

Former NEA chief Noel Sanchez yesterday announced that he and his ex-workers would seek a court injunction to stop the government from abolishing the agency.

Sanchez yesterday said during a press conference that the planned abolition of the agency resulted in the termination of more than 700 NEA employees on Dec. 31, 2003.

Sanchez said he and his workers would also seek to stop the appointment and hiring of new NEA employees who were not previously connected with the agency.

"We're just fighting for the rights of the employees who lost their jobs," Sanchez told reporters. He cited provisions in the law that prohibits the hiring of new personnel during an election period.

According to Sanchez, the government is set to hire new personnel to justify the disbursement of the NEA budget and savings, which he suspected would be diverted to fund the political campaign of a few incumbent officials.

Sanchez also urged the Commission on Audit to check on the NEA funds after he learned that there had already been reports of disbursements at the NEA despite the absence of regular bonded personnel.

Sanchez claimed that P1.350 billion—part of which was supposed to go to the terminated employees, plus a subsidy from Congress—is up for disposal.

Members of the Bandido NEA Movement also questioned the reenactment of the House budget while the government was planning to abolish the agency.

10 BIR, finance officials rapped for P21-M fraud

By Leila Salaverria

TEN OFFICIALS and employees of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Department of Finance are facing criminal charges before the Office of the Ombudsman for their alleged involvement in defrauding the government of over P21 million in taxes.

The National Bureau of Investigation's Anti-Graft Division under lawyer Jose Yap on Friday filed fraud raps against Carolina Pineda, head revenue executive assistant, and Atty. Lirio Cabsaba, assistant commissioner. Both are under the Collection Service of the BIR.

Also charged were Angelina Gatchalian, Rosita Fernandez and Potenciano Evangelista, all from the BIR's Collection Programs Division.

In the Finance department, those charged were Atty. Leon Acuña, intelligence officer V of the Central Management Information Office, Ernesto Hiansen, executive director of the One-Stop Shop Center, and Grace Flaminiano, Melda Ribas and Emelita Tizon.

According to the NBI, 18 other people have also been charged with violation of the anti-graft and corrupt practices act, falsification by private individuals and use of falsified documents, falsification by a public officer, and usurpation of authority.

According to Yap, 13 other private individuals, whom he said benefited from the fraud, were also included in the charges.

Yap said the NBI followed the trail of two spurious tax credit certificates (TCC) which were transferred to two private companies. The companies, he said, were able to use the fake TCCs to settle tax obligations amounting to P21,295,735.42.

But Yap said that the two TCCs, which were originally issued to Rohm Electronic Philippines Inc., had already been used up even before the transfer. The original TCCs from REPI amounted to P5 million and P19 million each.

Yap said that the TCCs are as good as cash. He explained that the certificates are issued when a company or manufacturer is entitled to a tax refund. He said TCCs can be transferred or sold to other companies.

Abueva, Miranda in Kilosbayan forum

FORMER University of the Philippines president Dr. Jose V. Abueva, and Pulse Asia head Prof. Felipe B. Miranda will be the guest speakers of the Kilosbayan forum today, 2 p.m., at the Jose P. Laurel Hall of Freedom, Lyceum of the Philippines, Intramuros, Manila.

Miranda will discuss "The Latest Pulse Asia Survey on the National Candidates and Its Significance," while Abueva will present his "Analysis of the May 10 Elections," according to Kilosbayan president Jovito R. Salonga.

Former ambassador Sedfrey A. Ordoñez, former Civil Service Commission chair Corazon Alma De Leon and Ambassador Reynaldo O. Arcilla will lead the open forum following the speeches.

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PAL INTERCLUB

Del Monte keeps chief rivals at bay

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

CAGAYAN DE ORO— Looks like Del Monte's for real.

Showing they have depth as well, the Del Monte second-stringers expertly kept the opposition at bay yesterday as they pressed their bid to become the first Mindanao team to win in the Philippine Airlines Interclub golf championship.

Team captain Ramon (Yoyong) Velez scored a one-under-par 71 for 37 points at the Pueblo de Oro course here and Del Monte came up with another front-running total of 141 in the second round in a brilliant follow-up to its scorching, record-smashing 156 start Wednesday.

With a 297 total, Del Monte even increased its lead over the youth-laden Manila Southwoods by seven points while pulling ahead by 17 over perennial champion and outstanding favorite Canlubang in this event revered as the national golf team championship.

"There's no choice but to go all out tomorrow," said Canlubang skipper Luigi Yulo, whose team, ironically, failed to respond with a balanced attack it used to overwhelm the enemy while under pressure in the past.

For while former pro Dave Hernandez and top amateur Juvic Pagunsan combined for 77 points, the two other Canlubang bets who counted (J.R. Tanpinco and Ronnie Torrecampo) in another 140 round could only make 63 between them.

Hernandez, a former Putra Cup individual champion, shot the day's low medal round of 69 while Pagunsan, this year's Philippine Open runner-up, overcame miserable putting to score a 68.

In contrast, Del Monte underscored its depth as Louie Dacudao backed up Velez with an even par 72 for 36 points and Jett Plete had a 73 for 35. The fourth score that mattered was one of the 33s submitted by Ben Miñoza and Tristan Tabañas.

"We never felt that we would collapse today. Both lineups playing in Del Monte and Pueblo de Oro are solid. This team is no pushover," said Velez, who credited his boys' superb form to the tremendous support given them by Martin Lorenzo, the Del Monte managing director.

The leading stars in this 57th year of the annual tournament actually didn't only have familiarity of the tree-laden Del Monte course in Manolo Fortich town in Bukidnon going for them.

The Del Monte aces went into the tournament having already proven their worth as members of the Mizuno team that won the Am division in the 2001 and 2002 Fil-Am golf tournament in Baguio and then dethroned Southwoods as champion in the elite Fil section last December.

Significantly, Del Monte is the first Mindanao team to come closest to winning the event by placing third in Bacolod three years ago. Teams from Luzon have dominated the Interclub since 1977, the year Canlubang, now seeking a record fifth and 13th title overall, became the first squad to prevail on its rookie year.

DEL MONTE/ A25

TRISTAN Tabañas of Del Monte blasts out of the bunker at the 15th hole.
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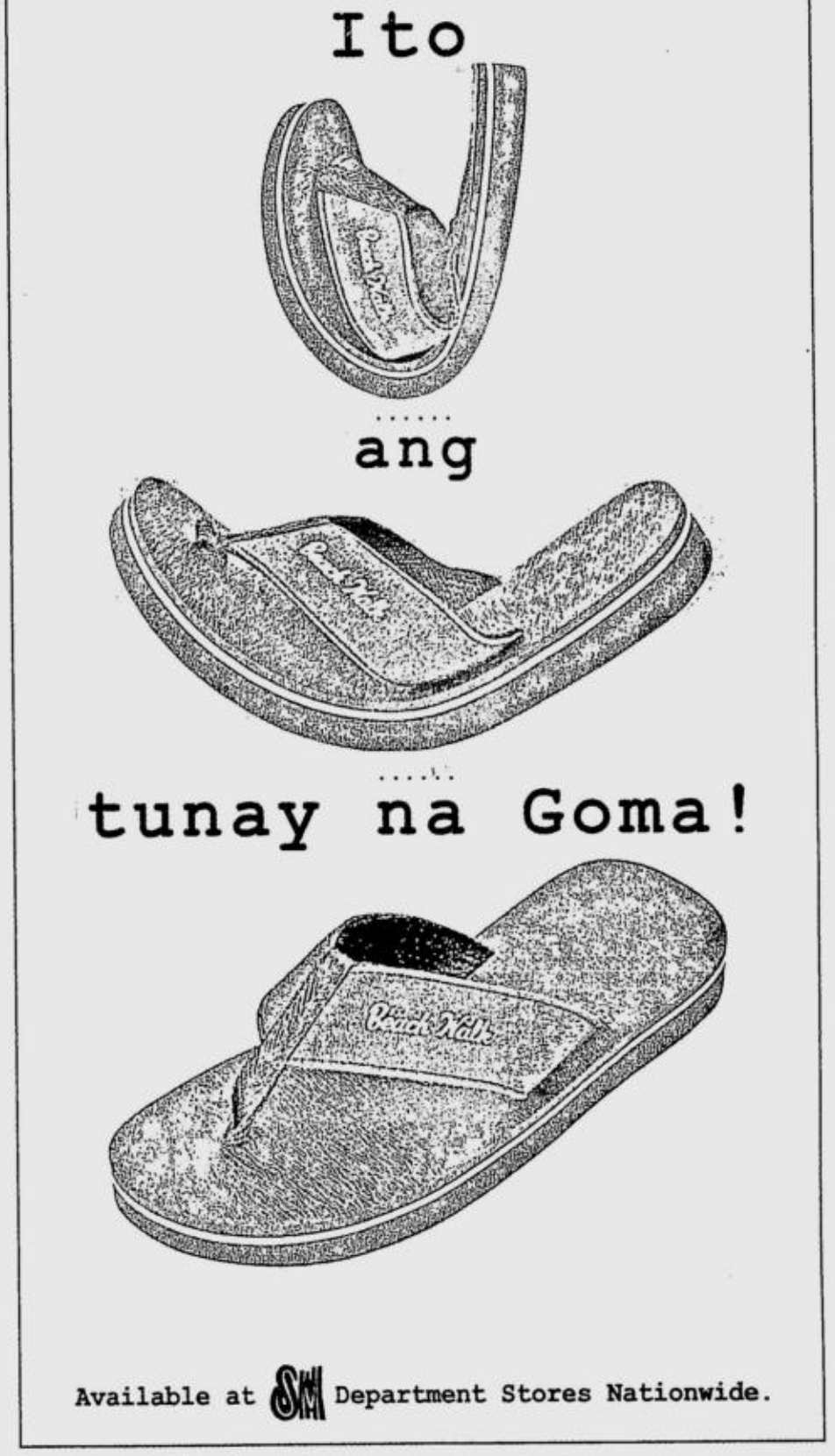

WHAT'S INSIDE

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■ **Henin, Capriati advance** /A27

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Cage leaders back 'superbody'

THE COUNTRY'S premier leagues on Wednesday night took the first step toward the formation of a "basketball superbody" amid snowballing calls from various organizations to put an end to the bitter power dispute between two groups both claiming to be country's legitimate national sports association.

ALL FOR ONE: League leaders and basketball stakeholders in a show of unity. From left, Omampo, Maniego, Cinco, Jorge, Eala, Encarnado, Martelino, Cercado, Ong, Villa, Bernardino and Llaguno.

In a top-level meeting in Pasig City, representatives from the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA), Philippine Basketball League (PBL), University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Basketball Association of the Philippines Inc. (Bapi) and individual stakeholders in the sport agreed to form a larger group that will put local basketball back on track.

The leagues also asked the PBA, represented by chair Buddy Encarnado and commissioner Noli Eala, to be at the forefront of the organization. The group agreed to work on the draft of the by-laws prepared by former Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) secretary general Moying Martelino.

The court-recognized Bapi, headed by Nic Jorge, claims to be the legitimate national amateur basketball association although it though does not enjoy the support of the Philippine Olympic Committee, which recognizes the Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP) headed by Quinteliano "Tiny" Literal and secretary general Graham Lim.

The BAP also counts on the support of the international basketball federation Fiba.

The PBL, which also took an active role in a similar group in 2001, was represented by commissioner Chino Trinidad, deputy commissioner Tommy Ong and Butch Maniego, assistant to the commissioner.

Others present were lawyer Rene Ma. Villa and University of the Philippines chancellor Claro Llaguno for the UAAP; University Perpetual Help-Rizal chancellor Dr. Ramon Cercado and Mike Del Mundo for the NCAA, Jorge and legal counsel Cecil Cinco for the Bapi; Rolly Omampo of the Referees Commission; and former PBA commissioner Jun Bernardino, who attended as an observer.

"There is a need to voice out our concern about the present situation wherein two contending groups are engaged in an endless dispute over control of Philippine basketball," said Encarnado.

"As stakeholders, we are also behind calls for unity and the fulfillment of our dream of finally seeing a Philippine team playing in the Olympics soon. It has been a long time since our last team played in the 1972 Olympics in Munich. It's about time we play in top level competitions again."

Eala raised the need for the top leagues to be "behind a truly wholistic national basketball program. It is time for us to bet on something for the general benefit of our sport."

Meanwhile, representatives from the National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA), the largest collegiate sports grouping in terms of participation, and the Universities and Colleges Athletic Association (UCAA) yesterday said they are waiting for their respective boards to withdraw the leagues formally from the BAP.

Rudy Ascona, a respected basketball leader in Bacolod, said: "That's the best thing (formation of superbody) that's going to happen in Philippine basketball. All the rest are going to follow whatever comes out of the meetings. It is something that would help us regain our supremacy in the region."

The Securities and Exchange Commission and the Court of Appeals have both declared that the Bapi is the legitimate national association for basketball.

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Del Monte's pride

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—There are three persons that immediately come to mind when you step into the hallowed grounds of Del Monte Golf Club in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon—Frankie Miñoza, Celestino "Ka Tino" Tugot and Robert Warne.

I'm sure you are all familiar with Miñoza and Tugot.

But Robert Warne? Who he? Inventor of Del Monte's world-famed sweet, sweet pineapples?

Read on, fellas.

Frankie Miñoza became Del Monte's next best contribution to golf after Ka Tino Tugot.

Before he won the Philippine Open crown at Riviera's Couples in 1998, Frankie's popularity had extended to Japan where he earned a fortune—and continues to do so—winning big tournaments from the '80s to the early '90s.

In 1990, Frankie topped the Order of Merit of the Asian Golf Circuit, a feat that earned him an invitation to play in the 1991 US Masters through the representation and prodding of DHL's Rod Feliciano.

But luck wasn't on Frankie's side that year. On the eve of the US Masters, he suffered an allergy caused by a pollen. A wrong medicine he had bought over-the-counter aggravated matters as the pill triggered a swelling in his eyes.

He almost did not start the next morning. He initially refused to disembark from his Cadillac car after he had arrived at the Augusta National.

If not for the persuasive powers of Rod Feliciano, plus Dindo Gonzales' words of wisdom, Frankie would have been a no-show and blown away his chance as only the second Filipino after Luis "Golem" Silverio to play in the fabled US Masters.

And although he got cut (75-78) like Greg Norman that year, Frankie did the country proud by hitting his first drive to within pitching wedge distance—despite virtually playing with only one good eye.

After his stupendous tee shot on the par-4 first, Dindo Gonzales hugged me tight and suddenly waxed sentimental, if not sounded morbid. Dindo said to me, "Now, I can die in peace."

Before Miñoza came along to capture the local golf world by storm, Ka Tino Tugot was Del Monte's *niño bonito* for nearly four decades starting in the Forties. Miñoza's records would actually pale in comparison if we consider Tugot's achievements: 6 Philippine Open titles (Del Monte's books claim Tugot had 7, though).

Ka Tino, still going strong at 88, recorded one of his most scintillating achievements when he represented the Philippines in the Canada Cup, the forerunner of the World Cup. That was in 1954. He awed the world with his shot making skills there. One man from the gallery was so impressed by Ka Tino's talent that he had Ka Tino invited to a special dinner after the tournament. That man was none other than Ike Eisenhower, then President of the United States of America. Their first meeting was immortalized by a photo showing them shaking hands. Ka Tino had donated that photo to Del Monte, which greets every visitor of the Del Monte Clubhouse as it is prominently displayed at the club entrance.

It's been 50 years since Ka Tino's dinner with Eishenhower. A Filipino athlete has yet to duplicate that feat of even a handshake with an American President.

And now to Robert Warne.

"He will always be remembered here at Del Monte as the man who never gave up," said Mike Comique, the golf club chairman.

Robert Warne actually deserves a place in the Guinness Book of World Records—if he hasn't been yet accorded that. Read more about Robert Warne here tomorrow.

Abangan!

***

PEOPLE THAT MATTER. The people worth mentioning here for their invaluable efforts in making the ongoing 57th PAL Interclub a success insofar as media coverage is concerned are Rosie Dizon, Jun Canton, Raul Castro, Abraham Bacas, Bobby Toriano and Eugene Labadan. These are the guys and dolls who make our coverage of the nation's team championship quite easy, if not a virtual walk in the park. If the event's Media Center is so well run, it's because of them. Their boss, the inimitable Rollie Estabillo, must be in Cloud 9 again these days. Cheers!... Over at Del Monte, one lady who struck me as real tough and gutsy is Bella Quimpo, the Del Monte Club manager. Bel is one of the few ladies around who is a golf club manager. And she doesn't play golf! "But I have started taking golf lessons already," said Bel, who was appointed to the post in January 2003 to add to her position as Company Facilities Manager. Oh, well, hurry up on that, Bel. I hope to have a round with you soon, in the company of Mike Comique. And let's include Secretary Cito Lorenzo?

***

FASTBREAK. Ed Picson, that PBA sportscaster nonpareil, has asked me a favor I could not refuse. He wants me to mention the names of his *kababayans* from Tacloban City who are members of San Juanico in the ongoing 57th PAL Interclub at Del Monte and Pueblo de Oro. They are Roger Lo, Boy Mortega, Charlie Ben, Vic Esperas, Ed Macopia, Efren Alvez, Willie Domingo, Nestor Mercado, Bimboy Basilio and Kenneth Basilio. Good luck, fellas.

Torre stays on top with Paragua

SAN FERNANDO City, La Union—Grandmaster Eugene Torre needed four hours to subdue Roland Salvador of the Philippine Navy yesterday and stay on top in the third La Union Open chess championship at the Diego Silang Hall of the La Union Provincial Capitol here.

The top-seeded Torre extracted the win after 67 moves of an English Opening, giving him two points in a tie with 25 others.

(See related picture on Page 26)

"It's a wonderful game. I hope I can sustain the momentum," Torre told scribes covering the tournament organized by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines in cooperation with La Union Gov. Victor Ortega, San Fernando City Mayor Mary Jane Ortega and Villa Estrella Beach Resort.

Also with two points were SEA Games' most bemedalled athlete and 2nd seed GM-candidate Mark Paragua, 3rd seed IM Richard Bitoon, 5th seed IM Barlo Nadera, 6th seed IM Petronio Roca, 8th seed IM Jayson Gonzales and 10th seed Fide Master Fernie Donguines.

Paragua beat Rustum Tolentino in 38 moves of a King's Indian Attack; Bitoon edged Virgilio Vuelban in 37 moves of a Nimzo-Indian Defense; Nadera nipped Ferdinand Leysa in 46 moves of a French Defense; Roca outplayed Edmundo Gatus in 43 moves of a Slav Defense, Gonzales defeated 37th seed Rico Salimbagat in 56 moves of Bishop Opening and Donguines beat Robert Arellano in 50 moves of a Bishop Opening. Local bet Belsar Valencia tripped 4th seed IM Chito Garma in 61 moves of a Sicilian Defense-Alapin variation. *NM Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

Hawks claw Danes; game under protest

LUCENA CITY—Three-time champion University of Manila drubbed Angeles University Foundation, 97-79, yesterday but still needs to win the boardroom battle to formalize its entry to the semifinals of the National Students Basketball Championship at the Quezon Convention Center here.

The AUF Great Danes put the game under protest, claiming that coach Loreto Tolentino committed a blunder by fielding 14 players, two more than what the tournament stipulated.

According to the rules, a team may only use 12 of the 15 players on its roster.

Members of the technical committee, headed by tournament director Boy Reglo, were still deliberating on the protest at presstime.

AUF had earlier raised a howl when coach Tolentino sent in pint-sized Ace Margarejo at the start of the third quarter. Margarejo was not included in UM's 15-man lineup. Later, Tolentino sent in his second stringers, bringing the number of men he fielded to 14.

But Tolentino was confident that the committee will rule in their favor.

"Sayang naman yung magandang nilalaro ng mga bata," said Tolentino.

Louie Aquino exploded for 16 points in the third quarter, including three triples, to lead the Hawks with 31 points. Jovit Gomez had 30 points, while Ronnie Matias added 21.

If the BAP's technical committee throws out AUF's protest, UM will meet the winner between University of Perpetual Help of Rizal and host Enverga University.

Earlier, NCR champion Philippine Martitime Institute downed University of Mindanao, 92-78, to advance to the semifinal round today against the winner of the University of Baguio-Southern City College tussle still being played at presstime.

In the junior division, defending champion San Beda College takes on Philippine Christian University while NCR runner-up Philippine College of Criminology battles De La Salle Greenhills in semis matches today.

The tournament is jointly organized by the Basketball Association of the Philippines and the provincial government of Quezon headed by Gov. Willie Enverga and sponsored by Cebuana Lhuillier, Burlington, Molten, Healthy Options and the Philippine Sports Commission.

The Red Cubs bundled out Joseph Morello Institute, 112-61, while DLGH ousted Ateneo de Davao, 71-61. In the other quarterfinal pairing, PCCr topped Maryhill and PCU clipped Benedictine International School, 85-78.

In the women's division, PMI dealt Lyceum its first loss, 53-45, to improve to a 2-1 mark in a tie with Ateneo. The Pirates dropped to 3-1.

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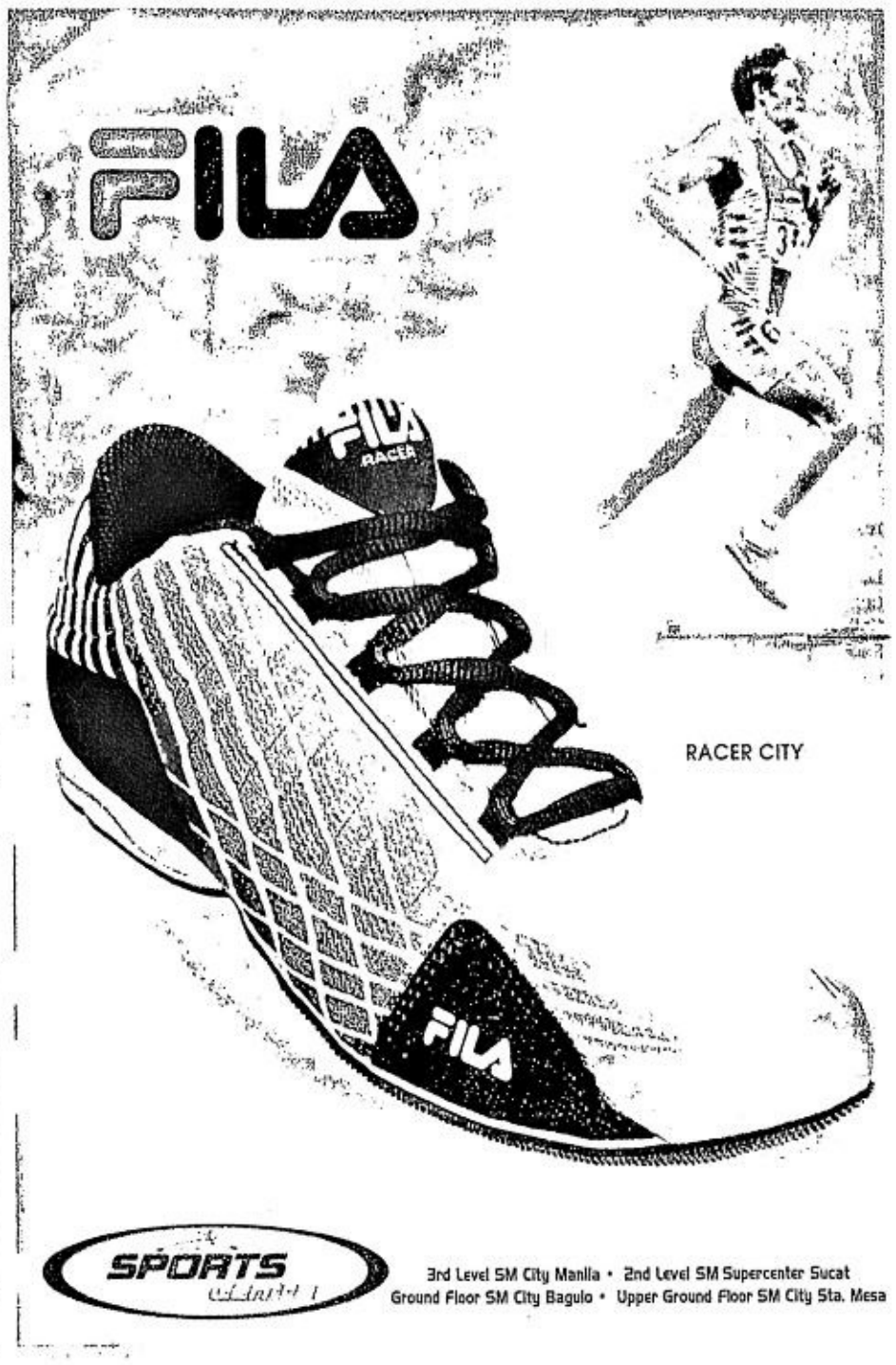
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Del Monte keeps chief rivals at bay

From page A23

It's a virtual repeat of that Baguio showdown in today's third round as Del Monte tries to pull away from Southwoods for good by fielding its explosive opening-day lineup on its home turf.

This means Romeo Jaraula, Lito Retuerto, Joel Opaco and Arsenio Mondilla, who had combined for a 13-under medal score in the first round, will be joining hands with Ben Miñoza in trying to push Del Monte out of Southwoods' reach.

But Southwoods, represented by a third-generation squad that includes 14-year-old TonTon Asistio, seemed no pushover.

The Carmona-based squad kept in step with Del Monte almost throughout the round until playing team captain Jeric Hechanova, the last man up, missed a short par putt on the 18th and settled for 30 points.

Earlier, Mark Lopez and Gene Bondoc checked in with 37 points each while former national champion Artemio Murakami contributed 36 in a performance that Southwoods chair Bob Sobrepeña said was "a pleasant surprise."

"We're just happy that such a young team, fielded just for exposure, can be competitive in this level," said Sobrepeña.

Swinging back to action for Southwoods are Toru Nakajima, Michael Bibat, Hanson So Jr. and Asistio, who produced an equally outstanding six-under par aggregate score in the first round.

Joining Tommy Manotoc in what Yulo said will be a "make-or-break" round for Canlubang today are Pagunsan and Jay Bayron, a former Uratex caddie champion, who tied for 16th among Filipinos in the last RP Open.

Meanwhile, Pueblo de Oro wrested the Founders division lead with 254 points, taking a two-point edge over Wack Wack. Forest Hills and Cebu Country Club shared third with 246.

Negros pulled away in the Sportswriters division with 229 while Mactan Coral and Zamboanga tied for the Friendship lead with 187.

This year's major sponsors are ABS-CBN Global, Airbus, RJ 100 FM, CNN International, GE Aircraft Engines, Golden Nugget Hotel Las Vegas, Johnnie Walker, Manila Broadcasting Corp., Radio Mindanao Network, Royal Caribbean International and UMBN.

The other corporate backers of the event are 105.2 Crossover, Joey 92.3, PLDT, 96.3 WRock, Asia Brewery, Boeing, Boysen Pacific Paint, Century Park Hotel, INQ7.net, Jam 88.3 and Tanduay.

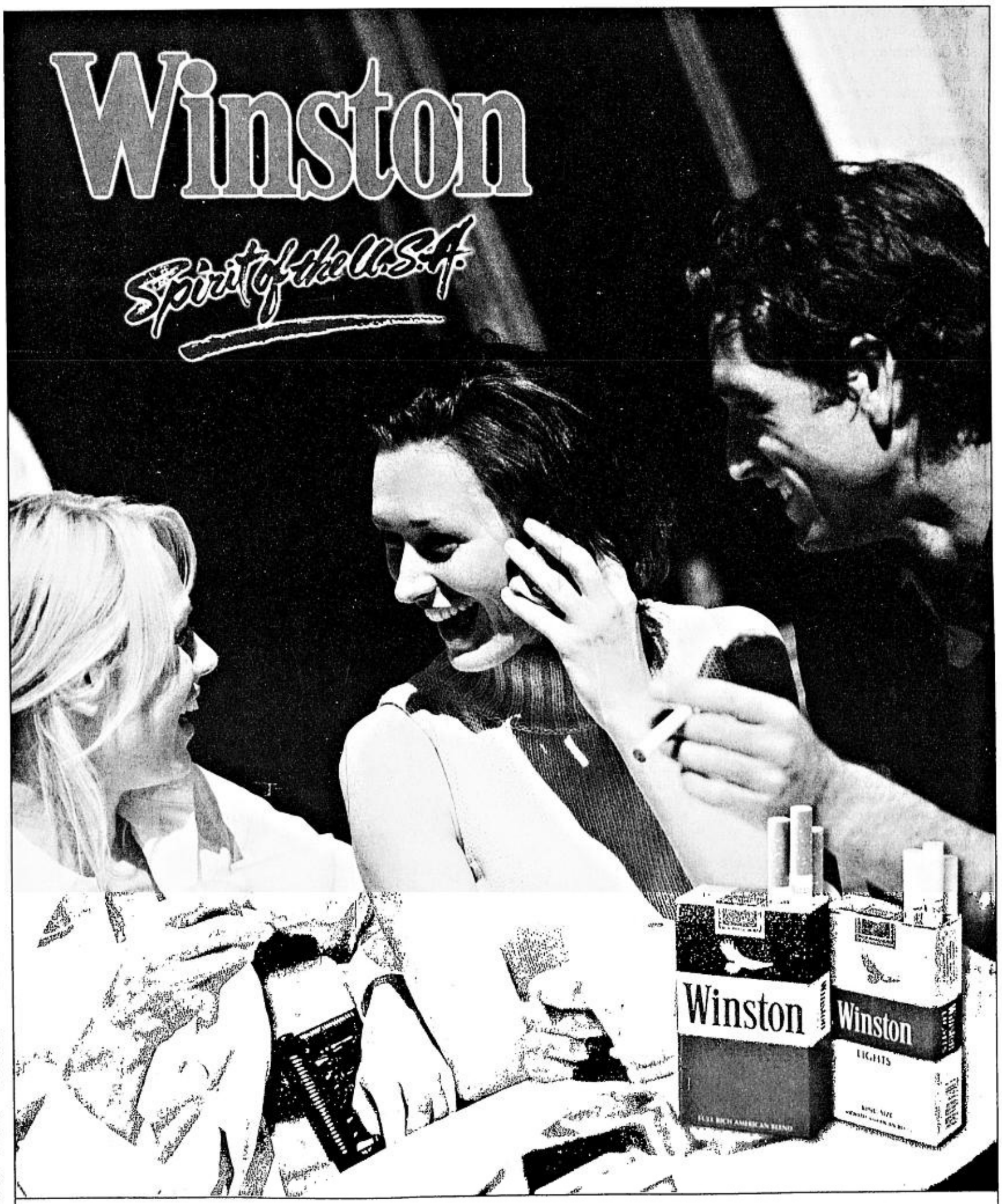
The second-round scores:

CHAMPIONSHIP—Del Monte 297 (156-141), Southwoods 290 (150-140), Canlubang 280 (140-140), SFO Crystal Springs 203 (106-97), Davao 184 (84-100), San Jose 176 (78-98), Lanang 151 (71-80), Fil-Oz Melbourne 123 (64-59), Alliance 114 (64-49), Pinoy Golfers SIN 77 (39-38)

FOUNDERS—Pueblo de Oro 254 (126-128), Wack Wack 252 (122-130), Forest Hills 246 (122-124), Cebu 246 (128-118), Riviera 237 (115-122), Sherwood Hills 230 (108-122), Alabang 229 (108-121), Manila Golf 227 (113-114), Palos Verdes 217 (102-115).

SPORTSWRITERS—Negros 229 (109-120), Team LA 218 (101-117), Iligan 214 (101-113), John Hay 213 (111-102), Orchard 204 (107-97), Valley Golf 203 (103-100), Sta. Elena 200 (104-96), Pacay 199 (99-100), Iloilo 194 (100-94), Leyte 194 (100-94), Hawaii Fil-Am 187 (99-88), Villamor 187 (89-98), Camp Evangelista 186 (97-89), Apo 183 (90-93), Greenhills West 154 (71-83)

FRIENDSHIP—Mactan Coral 187 (106-81), Zamboanga 187 (96-91), Victorias 184 (86-98), Alta Vista 184 (92-92), Lumbia 180 (85-95), Baguio 178 (83-95), Capitol 177 (88-89), Phil. Navy 174 (86-88), Makarilka 170 (94-76), San Juanico 165 (51-84), Pittsburg 163 (83-80), UP Tee Jots 156 (76-80), South Cotabato 154 (66-88), Club Filipino 139 (59-80), Sky West 132 (65-67), Fil-Oz Sydney 124 (61-63), Seattle 121 (56-65), PAGA San Jose 119 (59-60), Cotabato 118 (58-60), Golfinos 117 (40-77), Riyadh Dirab 112 (57-55), Saudi Aramco 111 (44-67).



Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

Buhain tells POC: Give us list of SEAG venues

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PHILIPPINE Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain yesterday urged the Philippine Olympic Committee to come up with the list of venues and other requirements for the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

Buhain made the request following the POC's cancellation of a tour by SEAG Federation delegates to the venues of the Manila 2005 Games because these have not been determined by the POC-controlled SEAG Organizing Committee (Philsoc).

The PSC chief said the agency proposed to the POC last month at least 40 sites for the SEA Games but the local Olympic body ignored the list.

"The government is ready, but we have to have a decision now," said Buhain, referring to the delay in the announcement of venues."

Buhain added: "Where do we come in as far as doing our share for the SEAG?"

He urged Dayrit to take decisive action "or we both face the embarrassment of having an ill-prepared RP Team and a half-baked hosting (of the Games)."

But POC officials said the Philsoc will not discuss the Games' venues and sites until after the federation meetings, which will initially tackle the calendar of sports disciplines to be contested in the biennial event.

The country's SEAG hosting is estimated to cost about P500 million.

The hosting issue is reportedly hanging because bidders have not submitted their re-evaluated proposals based on the new requirements set by the POC.

Still, Buhain said the agency needs to be informed about the prospective venues since the government has committed itself to finance the Games. He said the government will shoulder the cost of building and refurbishing infrastructure needed for the Games.

"If we have to renovate the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, then let us know so we can work it out," Buhain said.

"We'd like to know from (Dayrit) because we have to coordinate with government agencies," said Buhain. "We need to be able to present something to President Macapagal-Arroyo."

The PSC was not invited to the two-day SEAG Federation meeting which started yesterday. Forty-four delegates from 11 countries are in town for the meeting.

Revved-up T'chargers outhustle Hotdogs

By June Navarro

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Rensy Bajar scored a career-high 17 points, including two crucial freethrows in the dying seconds as Shell downed Purefoods, 94-91, last night in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Lagao Gymnasium here.

Bajar's heroics paved the way for the Turbochargers' first win after a 0-2 start and snapped Shell's eight-game losing streak dating back to last year's Reinforced Conference.

Coach Ryan Gregorio and the TJ Hotdogs, who paraded a visibly out-of-sync Reginald Butler, absorbed their second straight loss after a victorious tournament opener against the Coca-Cola Tigers last week.

The 6-foot-8 Butler, who arrived in this city famous for its tuna yesterday morning, failed to exploit the early departure of Shell import Marek Ondera, who twisted his right ankle after a bad fall early in the third quarter.

The setback spoiled another glorious evening for Purefoods team captain Alvin Patrimonio, who scored his 2,000th assist after dishing off a pass to Butler in the third. He became the fifth player in PBA history to achieve the feat.

Shell's Chris Jackson also achieved a milestone, grabbing his 1,000th offensive rebound to join 25 other players in the elite list.

The PBA's first out-of-town sortie this year was organized by the Notre Dame-Dadiangas College Batch '79 and supported by coach Dayong Mendoza and Popsies Diner.

"It was a miracle effort by everybody in the team," said Shell coach John Moran. "It was the greatest basketball performance I've ever seen in my 24 years of coaching. Everyone contributed from top to bottom. The players left their hearts and souls on the basketball court tonight."

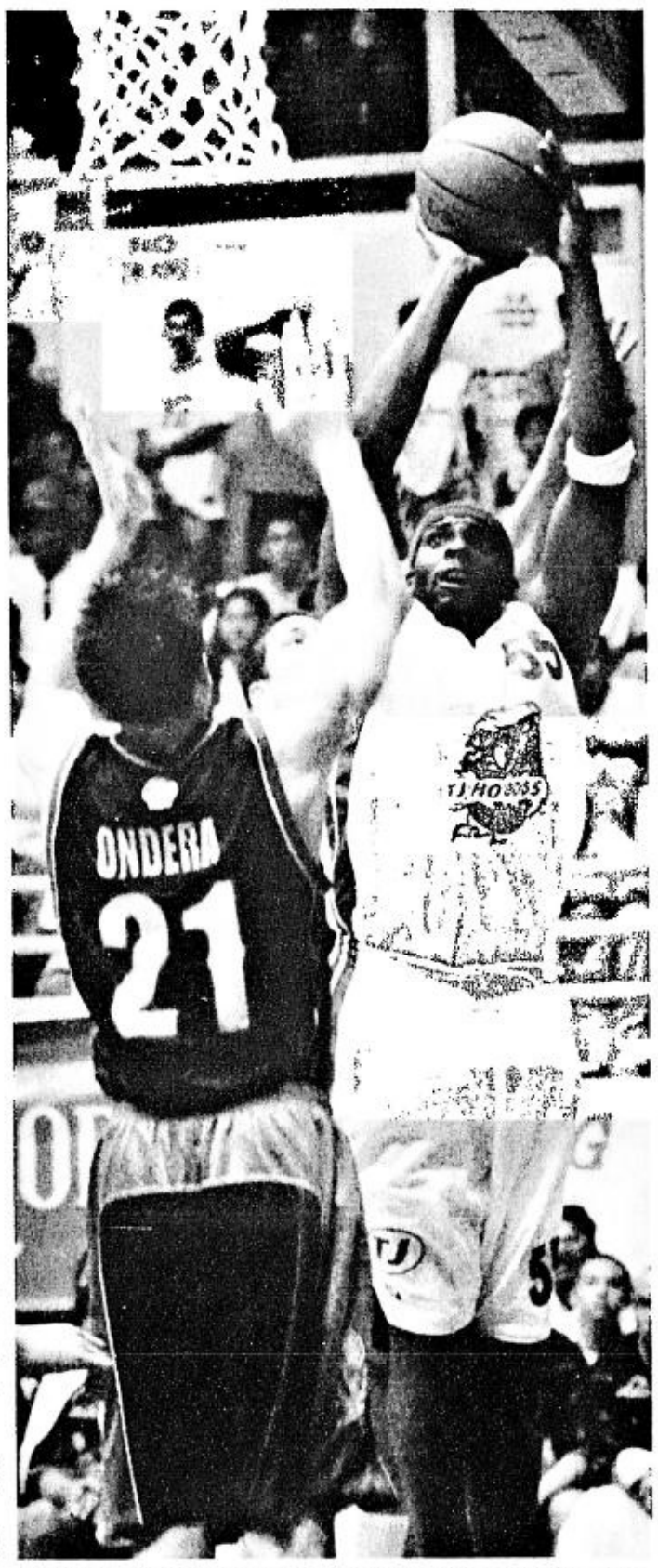
Christian Calaguio drained a running jumper with 2:57 to go to give Shell what seemed like a safe 92-83 lead, with only 2:57 to go in the game. But the Hotdogs rattled off six unanswered points to come within three, 92-89, with 52 seconds left in the game.

The scores:

SHELL 94—Calaguio 24, Dela Cruz 20, Bajar 17, Ondera 15, Ferreria 8, Alvarez 3, Mamaril 2, Hrabak 2, Jackson 2, Tubid 1, Sta. Maria 0.

PUREFOODS 91—Simon 19, Castillo 17, Raymundo 15, Limpot 10, Butler 9, Yap 9, Patrimonio 5, Johnson 4, Artadi 2, Evangelista 1.

Quarters: 22-19, 53-45, 75-73, 94-91



NEW Purefoods import Reginald Butler shoots off Shell's Marek Ondera during their PBA game in General Santos City last night. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

SPORTSWATCH

Motorsports roars off in P. Princesa

AN expected mammoth crowd will be treated to an intense, high-speed motorcycle racing and a showdown of off-road vehicles in back-to-back motorsports events highlighting the foundation day of Puerto Princesa this weekend. The second Caltex Delo 4x4 Off-Road Challenge and Puerto Princesa Invitational Motocross will feature some of the country's top riders who are back on the island on the invitation of Mayor Edward Hagedorn and local officials. Race organizers are anticipating a crowd of more than 20,000 people to watch the twin events organized by MP Turbo, Land Cruiser Club of the Philippines, Palawan Eagle Riders and the National Motorcycle Safety and Sports Association. The motorsport weekend is sponsored by Caltex Delo Sports, Cebu Pacific, Red Horse Beer, Speed and BLTBCO. A 4x4 Off-Road Challenge will be held tomorrow with at least five vehicles from Manila facing stiff competition from Puerto's locally made Jeeps and off-road cruisers. Sunday's Foundation Day Invitational Motocross Race will pit the talents of Palawan's top drivers against upcoming talents from Manila. The event will also serve as the preliminary event to the upcoming international FIM Asia Motocross Race on March 28 also in Puerto Princesa. "We are expecting a great Foundation Day weekend," said MP Turbo chief Mike Potenciano. "The response from last year's inaugural motorsport was so tremendous that Puerto Princesa has again done it for their race-loving populace. We hope that with the bigger number of Manila 4x4 enthusiasts coming, the people will again enjoy this new off-road sport."

All-student aerobics marathon today

THE XAVIER University gym in Divisoria plays host to the all-student Globe gentxt competitive/sports aerobics marathon in Cagayan de Oro City tomorrow. Registration starts at 8 a.m. with the Aerobics Marathon, which is part of the Globe Gentxt Invasion, set from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. The event is open to all able-bodied, physically fit students of Northern Mindanao. Ley Fernandez, secretary general of the Philippine International Competitive Aerobics Federation (PICAF), will supervise the competition together with PICAF national coach and athletes Marlon Capati, Lenlen Espiritu and Toots Ensomo. Three stages of low-impact aerobics, hiphop/street dance and taebo/kickboxing are lined up for participants in the male, female and team trio categories. An exhibition number by the RP aerobics team will spice up the opening ceremony. Cash prizes, glass trophies and finishers' certificates will be up for grabs in the event supported by Globe Gentxt to prepare the youth to be law-abiding participants in nation-building. For inquiries, call Tammy Obsines or Lestie Fonteras in Cagayan de Oro (0917-8967653) or Team Ventures (02) 400-9745/522-5953.

TRS search on for future racing star

THE TUASON Racing School (TRS) begins its new search for the country's future racing superstar with the second C! Top Driver Challenge 2004. The event, sponsored by Goodyear, Petron, Octane Racewear, Ambi Pur Car, Oakley, K & N filters, H&R suspension systems, Racegear, Options Unlimited, Brother's Burgers, C! Magazine, Trapik.com and Motorista.com.ph, comes after the school's successful 2003 edition. The C! Top Driver Challenge is open to everyone aged 17 and above with a valid driver's license, and is aimed at producing the country's next generation of motorsports heroes from a pool of relatively inexperienced aspiring race car drivers. Participants will compete against each other in a series of contests, with the top qualifiers advancing through four progressively difficult events. The legs consist of a "Video Challenge"—a racing arcade game competition on March 20 at the Timezone in Glorietta 4, Makati and on April 3 in Cebu; the "Karting Challenge" at the Speedzone on April 28, and at the Kart Zone on April 4; and the "Circuit Car Challenge" on May 2 at the Batangas Racing Circuit with TRS-prepared Ford Lynx racing cars. The top three finalists will advance to the two-day Circuit Car Training and Test on June 12 and 13, wherein the Top Driver will be chosen and given the chance to race for free in the Ford Lynx Cup 2004 Novice class. For inquiries, call the Tuason Racing School at (632) 5312962 or visit the website at www.tuasonracing.com

PIATA Cup set Monday at Sta. Elena

ROUND-TRIP tickets to international destinations courtesy of various airlines will be raffled off to lucky participants in the First PIATA Golf Cup this Monday at Sta. Elena Golf Club in Cabuyao, Laguna. Thai Airways International, the co-presentor of the event organized by the Philippine IATA Association of Travel Agents (PIATA), heads the list of donors to the exciting raffle package. The others are Cathay Pacific, Cebu Pacific, China Airlines, Continental Airlines, Japan Airlines, Kenya Air, KLM, Lufthansa, Northwest Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways and Trafalgar Tours. Major sponsors of the tourney are DHL Philippines, Philippine Airlines, Royal Caribbean International and Smart Communications. Hole sponsors are Abacus, ABCI (Gatorade), Amadeus, American Express, British Telecom, Deutsche Bank, Galileo, GG&A, Gourmet Farms Inc., Ice Vodka Bar, Kuoni Travel Ltd., Marsman Drysdale Foods, Metrobank, Montemar Beach Club, Pacsports, Philcomsat Holdings, Prudential Life, Singapore Tourism Board, Suarez&Sons, Teledata, Trends&Technologies. Frank Khouri, president of PIATA, and Ms Victoria Gonzales, PIATA Trustee bared that everything is set for the event that will feature at least 180 entries playing the 27-hole complex of Sta.Elena. For inquiries please call PIATA Secretariat 832-0901.

Batangas, Laguna cockers in PCC derby

LEADING cockers from Batangas and Laguna challenge their Metro Manila counterparts in another special 4-cock derby tonight at the Pasay City Cockpit with Sagupaan Hammer, Sagupaan Mite Free, Sagupaan B-50 Forten and Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsors. More than 50 matches are lined-up, according to derby host JV Rosario. Awaiting the winners is a cash prize of P300,000. Submission of entries is until 2 p.m. today For inquiries, call 843-1890, 843-1746 and 816-6750. Preparations are also under way for the PCCA Challenge to Champions 5-Cock Derby on March 15, 17 and 19 with P1 million at stake for an entry fee of P8,800. Meanwhile, the 4-cock event promoted by Bobot Yu of Valenzuela on March 10 will start at 2 p.m. because of the big number of fights. Also slated is the RCD Group 4-Cock derby on March 12.

Ring editor arrives today with Pac's belt

By Salven L. Lagumbay

RING Magazine editor Nigel Collins will arrive in Manila tonight bringing with him boxing's most prestigious belt—the Ring Magazine belt—which he will award to consensus featherweight king Manny Pacquiao.

Collins planes in via a Northwest Airlines flight at 9:50 p.m. at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Collins, only the sixth editor of the 82-year-old magazine, is also scheduled to pay a courtesy call on President Macapagal-Arroyo on Tuesday in Malacañang where the Ring belt will be officially awarded to Pacquiao.

The meeting with the President will mark only the second time that a Ring editor will have paid a courtesy call on a sitting Philippine President. Ring founder and long-time editor Nat Fleischer visited the Philippines in the mid-fifties while on a tour of the Orient. He met with President Ramon Magsaysay.

"It's a great honor to follow in the footsteps of Nat Fleischer and represent Ring Magazine in the Philippines," Collins said recently from Philadelphia, where the editorial offices of the Ring are located.

Collins noted that Pacquiao has infused an "electric type of enthusiasm" into the sport in the United States.

"He's excited the hardcore boxing fans in the US because of his hardcore style. He's fearless and he's ready to take on all the top fighters," said the editor.

Collins, who's also a well-known boxing historian, plans to pay homage to other Filipino ring legends, including Gabriel "Flash" Elorde and Pancho Villa, during his weeklong stay here. Both Elorde and Villa received Ring championship belts during their careers.

"Because of this trip," Collins said, "I've been looking into the history of Filipino boxing and I'm surprised at how many great Filipino fighters have come to the United States."

Collins said he especially wants to honor Pancho Villa, who fought in the US back in the 1920's and became a sensation. Collins plans to visit the grave of the Filipino boxing hero in Manila's North Cemetery.

Collins' trip to the Philippines is made possible by the generous sponsorship of Viva Entertainment, Reli Tours, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and the City of Manila.

FIRST MOVE: President Macapagal-Arroyo shakes hands with grandmaster Eugene Torre after making the ceremonial first moves kicking off the third La Union Open chess tournament at the Diego Silang Hall of the provincial capitol. Looking on are tournament hosts La Union governor Victor Ortega (to Ms Macapagal's left) and San Fernando City mayor Mary Jane Ortega (fourth from left, standing) as well as NCFP secretary general Samuel Estimo, engineer Joseph Dumuk, triple Southeast Asian Games gold medalist Mark Paragua and other tournament participants and officials.

Buena Vista Park adventure race under way today

THE LEVEL of competition is expected to be high when the Buena Vista Nature Park Adventure Race blasts off today in Tagaytay City.

Enduro San Miguel Light Adventure Race champions Mao Datiles and Cebuano Leo Oracion, a member of the only Philippine team that completed the grueling Eco Challenge Race in New Zealand in 2002, have formed separate teams in the Open division and are expected to battle for top honors in the competition supported by Rexona, San Mig Light, Dai-Ichi Electronics, PCSO, Petron Blaze, National Sports Grill, Summit Water, Café Lupe and Family Rubbing Alcohol.

Another early bet, American missionary and Cainta, Rizal-based David Petro, will team up with young adventure racers, according to organizer Mon Marchan.

The one-day event will see the three-man teams negotiate tough nature trails, rough roads, gullies and hills around the scenic Buena Vista Nature Park.

The top three teams in the Open division will receive P15,000, P10,000 and P5,000, in that order, plus trophies and medals.

FUTSAL CHAMPS: The University of Asia and the Pacific display their trophy after ruling the men's division in the recent first Ateneo Futsal Fiesta at the Ateneo Grade School Courts. The team, headed by coach Kleng Cacacho and co-captains Dodgie Garcia and Nicholas Reyes, is sponsored by Royal Caribbean Jamaican Patties. Garcia won the most valuable player plum.

Yao tops Shaq, but Lakers win

HOUSTON, Texas—Yao Ming outdueled Shaquille O'Neal in a one-on-one showdown of the National Basketball Association's best big men, but it was Kobe Bryant who gave the Los Angeles Lakers a victory over Houston.

Bryant scored 18 points, passed off a season-high 13 assists and added eight rebounds to rally the Lakers from a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter to a 96-93 triumph over the Rockets here Wednesday.

Bryant sank a fadeaway over 7-foot-6 Yao with 31 seconds remaining for the go-ahead basket. He had missed 12 of his first 18 shots before hitting the key shot. Derek Fisher added two late free throws to pad the final margin.

"It was just a matter of time," Bryant said. "I started making them after I had been coming up short on my shot. I had all the confidence in this world when I made that shot."

Chinese center Yao, who was one foul shy of disqualification, did his best to stop Bryant's clutch shot.

"(I was) almost on his face, but I don't want to get into trouble. I really tried to touch him," Yao said. "I felt the ball go by. It was a big shot." Yao produced a game-high 33 points and eight rebounds while O'Neal had 28 points and seven rebounds in this season's third matchup between the All-Star centers. The Rockets had won both prior meetings with the Lakers.

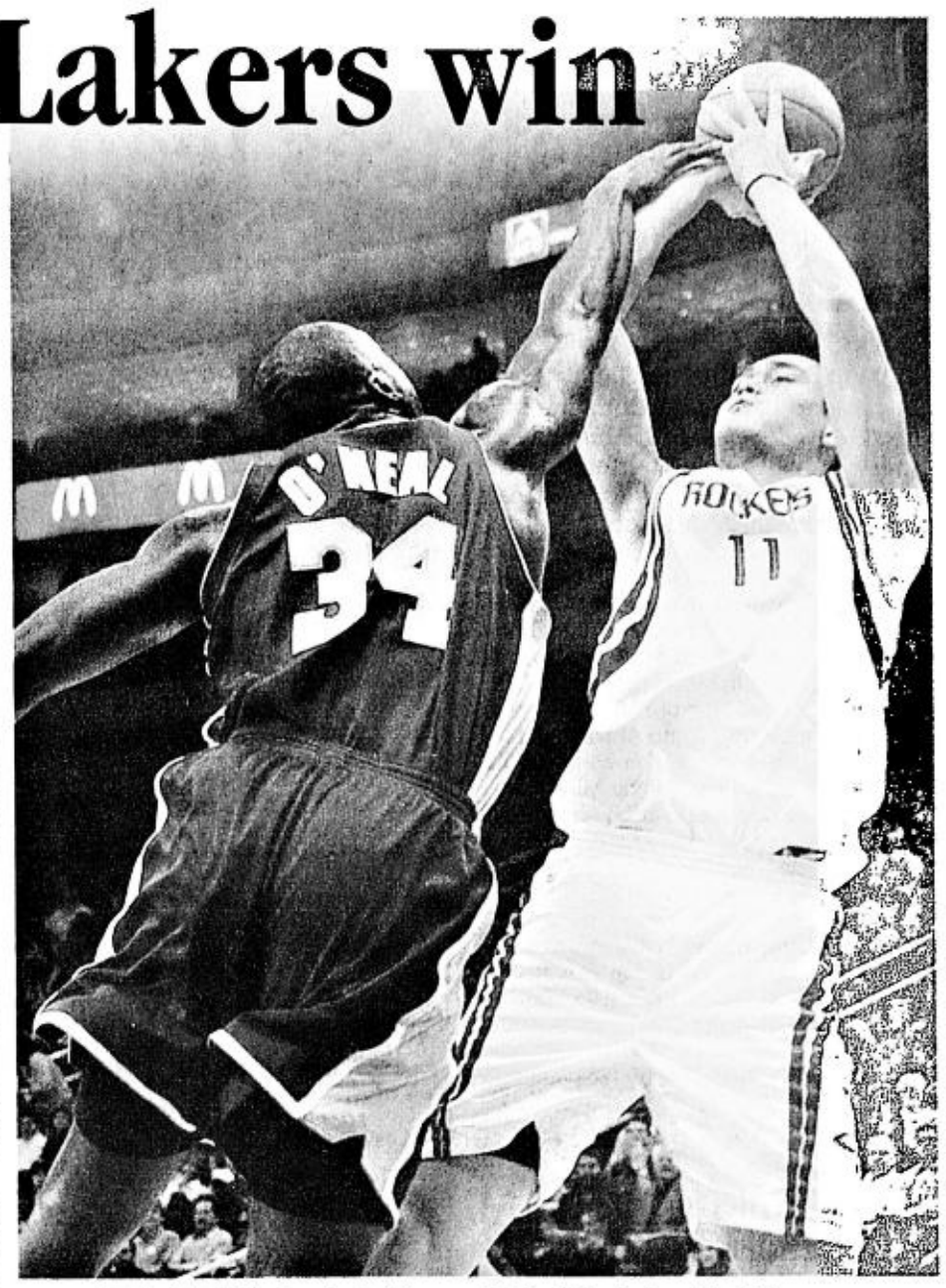
"I thought we did a really good job of coming back even with as late as it was," O'Neal said. "We hadn't shown it this year but we knew that we could play with this team anytime. We just have to do everything right." It was only the third time an opponent had produced more points and rebounds than O'Neal in fewer minutes. Yao has done it twice in two NBA seasons and Wayman Tisdale achieved the feat in Shaq's rookie season.

Yao shot 13-of-21 from the field and 7-of-7 from the free throw line while O'Neal was 13-of-18 from the field but only made 2-of-13 from the line.

Bryant, who missed a loss in Atlanta on Tuesday to attend a hearing in his sexual assault case in Colorado, sank the winner after struggling much of the game.

Cuttino Mobley's attempt at a game-tying 3-pointer bounced off the rim at the final buzzer.

Complete results: Phoenix 87, New Jersey 74; LA Lakers 96, Houston 93; Memphis 97, Portland 88; Washington 84, Toronto 70; Milwaukee 105, Orlando 97; Cleveland 112, Atlanta 80; New York 88, Philadelphia 77; New Orleans 100, Chicago 97 (ot); Indiana 101, LA Clippers 94 (ot); Minnesota 121, Dallas 97; San Antonio 88, Seattle 84. *AP*



LAKERS' O'Neal (34) blocks a shot by Houston Rockets' Yao during their NBA encounter won by the Lakers Wednesday. AP

Wang may yet play for China in Athens

BEIJING—Trailblazing Chinese basketball star Wang Zhizhi's chances of earning a recall for this year's Olympic Games have suffered a setback after he was left out of a preliminary squad for Athens.

Wang, the first player from China to break into the NBA, has been at loggerheads with Chinese basketball authorities since refusing to play for the national team at 2002 World Championships and last year's Asian championships.

However, a leading sports official left the door ajar, saying it was still possible for Wang to play at the Olympics.

Wang, currently with the NBA's Miami Heat, failed to return to China two years ago amid fears that his status as a soldier would prevent him from returning to his lucrative NBA career.

As a former player for the Bayi military basketball club and a lieutenant colonel in the People's Liberation Army, Wang has been dangerously close of being absent-without-leave (AWOL) as he has pursued his NBA career.

"The conditions for Wang Zhizhi to return to the national team is that he must first return to China, report to the Bayi team and then reach an understanding over what has happened in the past," Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) deputy head Hu Jiashi told Xinhua news agency.

Wang signed a multimillion dollar contract with the Los Angeles Clippers early last year, but was waived by the team in December, only to be signed by the Heat where he has seen limited playing time. *AFP*

PBL draft today

THE PHILIPPINE Basketball League (PBL) holds its Dispersal and Rookie Draft today at the Makati Coliseum with Viva Mineral Water-Far Eastern University in a position to grab the best available player among a list of aspirants.

Armed with the top pick, Viva coach Koy Banal is expected to get a fine shooter to boost his already formidable lineup following the team's preseason massive buildup, although reports have it that the team is already complete and have been practicing continuously for a month now.

More than 40 players, led by the prolific Neil Raneses of Cebu, joined the Aspirants Camp and Commissioner Chino Trinidad, who is confident the league will continue to attract the best amateur players in the land.

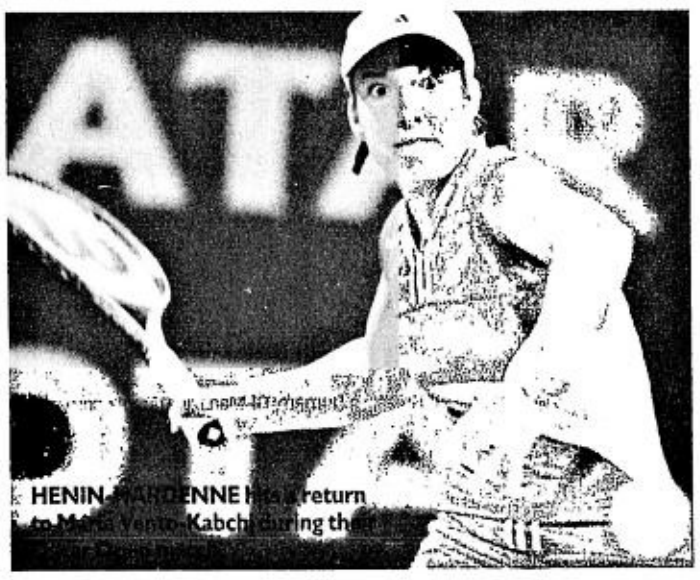
Five players

Before the rookie draft, five players from ICTSI-La Salle will be dispersed among the remaining seven teams after the Archers took a one-conference leave to prepare for the coming UAAP wars.

This early, the Archers are making no-nonsense buildup to regain their status as the country's top collegiate team.

The five La Salle players—all of them are no longer eligible to play in the PBL—are Raymond Magsumbol, Manny Ramos, Dominic Uy, Mon Jose and Dino Aldeguer.

Just like the regular draft, Viva will pick first followed by Montana Pawnshop, Sunkist-UST, Blustar Detergent, Welcoat Paints, Fash Liquid Laundry Detergent, Toyota Otis-Knights and Lee Pipes-Ateneo.



HENIN-HARDENNE [illegible] return to [illegible] Vento-Kabchi during the [illegible]

Henin, Capriati advance

DOHA—World number one Justine Henin-Hardenne and second seed Jennifer Capriati reached the quarterfinals of the Qatar Open on Wednesday.

Henin-Hardenne, winner of three titles already this year including the Dubai Open last weekend, took some time to settle before defeating Venezuela's Maria Vento-Kabchi, 7-5 6-3. In her second-round match Capriati beat China's Li Ting, 7-6, 6-1.

Defending champion Anastasia Myskina of Russia emerged a 6-1, 3-6 6-1 winner against compatriot and last year's beaten finalist Elena Likhovtseva.

American Meghann Shaughnessy showed the door to world number 10 Ai Sugiyama of Japan, posting a 6-3, 6-2 victory. Lowly-ranked but highly motivated Chinese world number 77 Zheng Jie upset Jelena Dokic, 6-4, 6-4.

In Thursday's quarterfinals, top-seed Henin-Hardenne will take on France's Nathalie Dechy while Shaughnessy meets Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova. Myskina will clash with Zheng and Capriati will cross swords with Silvia Farina Elia of Italy.

Henin-Hardenne had starting problems in her match after Vento-Kabchi broke her in the first and third games to jump to 3-0 lead. But once she settled down on the fast court there was no stopping her.

Russian duo Myskina and Likhovtseva are vastly improved from last year when they fought out the final. Myskina is more aggressive and powerful while Likhovtseva is sharper.

Zheng, ranked 77 in the world, turned pro just over a year ago and posted her best victory to date with the defeat of sixth-seed Dokic.

"I am feeling good. I will remember this victory for the whole of my life," the Chinese said. *Reuters*

DUBAI CLASSIC

Dredge leads with 64

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Welshman Bradley Dredge shot an 8-under 64 Thursday to take an early first-round lead in the fog-delayed Dubai Desert Classic.

Englishman David Howell was three back after a 67 with Australian Richard Green and Scott Drummond of Scotland in with 68s.

WOODS

The start of play was delayed 2 1/2 hours by morning fog, meaning tournament favorite Tiger Woods started early in the afternoon and was not expected to complete his round before dark.

He was 1-under after six holes.

Among the other favorites in the US$2 million tournament, world No. 3 Ernie Els shot a 2-under 70 and Darren Clarke of Northern Ireland carded an even-par 72.

A half-dozen other players carded early rounds of 69 including Pierre Fulke of Sweden, Gary Orr of Scotland and Peter Lawrie of Ireland.

Dredge had six birdies and dropped a 30-foot (9 meter) putt for an eagle on the 18th—his 9th hole.

"Because the greens are so good around here it was almost like an easy putt," Dredge said. "If you hit a good putt they are going to go in."

Dredge is playing only his third European Tour event this season. He said he used the other two events "as practice rounds" and carded a 63 in one of them.

"The real season starts here for me," he said.

Woods received US$3 million appearance money to play and faced one of the strongest fields on the European Tour.

Security was tight but low-key. Tournament officials said about 60-70 "plain clothes" police escorted Woods around the 7,264-yard, par-72 Majlis Course at the Emirates Golf Club.

Woods was supposed to play Dubai last year, but withdrew because of the impending war against Iraq.

In Woods' only other appearance in the tournament in 2001, Thomas Bjorn and Woods were tied for lead on the 17th hole of the final round. *AP*

Cebuana Lhuillier rules tilt

THE CEBUANA Lhuillier Softball team captured the Super Division Championship of the Pangaea Cup to end a nine-year drought for the Philippines in the Super Division category of the annual International Slo-pitch Softball tournament.

Eighteen teams from Indonesia, Hong Kong, Korea, China, Singapore and Taiwan participated in the three-day tournament held at the Alabang Country Club.

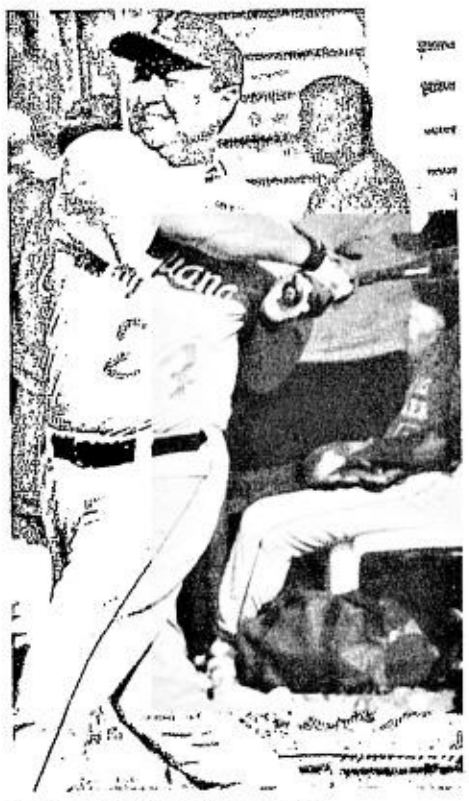
The teams were allowed to compete in Pangaea's three divisions: "Club," "A" and "Super" based on their record.

The Cebuana Lhuillier Team, led by team owner Jean Henri Lhuillier and manager Lan Perez, barged into the finals by besting three-time champion Hong Kong Guzzlers during the last round of the eliminations.

Tied with Korea and Jakarta at 3-1, the Philippines went straight to the final round with superior plus runs over the two other teams.

Korea won the deciding match with Jakarta and met the Philippines head-on at the tournament's Sunday championship showdown.

Through Jean Henri's batting average of .714 (5-7) for the weekend and the heroic efforts of Julius Visayas, Apol Rosales and Vio Roxas, the Cebuana Lhuillier Team made Pangaea history by driving 16 runs in one inning, and edging out Korea's Fatboyz at 30-20.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AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Davies, shares lead; transsexual way off

BAGGER

SYDNEY, Australia—England's Laura Davies and Denmark's Christina Kuld fired 4-under-par 68s Thursday to share a one-shot lead after the first round of the Australian Women's Open at Concord Golf Club.

Mianne Bagger made history by becoming the first transsexual to play in a professional women's tournament, opening with a 12-over 84. It would require an amazing turnaround in Friday's second round for Bagger to have any chance of qualifying for the weekend.

Only seven golfers broke par on a tough first day at Concord. South Africa's Laurette Maritz was in third place after a 3-under 69, followed by Australian Joanne Mills with a 70. England's Georgina Simpson, Italy's Sophie Sandolo and Australia's Karen Lunn shot 71s and are tied for fifth. Former No. 1 Karrie Webb of Australia had a 3-over 75.

Bagger said she was nervous in her debut.

"I didn't know where my swing was and it took a while to get rid of the nerves. The greens were fast and it didn't help hitting a few quite a few feet past." *AP*

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F1 racing still thrills 'Schumi'

SCHUMACHER

MELBOURNE—World champion Michael Schumacher is relishing the challenge of a season that could conceivably end his long reign as world champion.

The German narrowly won his sixth drivers' championship last year for Ferrari but is suddenly under siege from a crop of younger rivals when the Formula One season roars into action with Sunday's Australian Grand Prix.

"I love the sport and part of the sport and the main part of the sport is the competition, the overtaking, the thrill of whether you make it or whether you don't make it," Schumacher told a news conference on Thursday.

"That's what I'm looking for, that's what I'm living for." As one of the elder statesmen of motor racing, Schumacher has nothing left to achieve in the sport.

The 35-year-old has already won more championships and more races than any other driver in history and is rich beyond his dreams.

Now in his 14th season, Schumacher could be forgiven for wanting to slow down but says he has lost none of his motivation.

"It's still pure pleasure and thrill," he said.

"Winning the championship last season after having a tough time during the middle of the year has made me even more motivated this year.

"I'm looking forward to this season. I think it's going to be special." Schumacher's domination of Formula One convinced organisers to change the rules to make the sport more competitive, but it has not stopped him winning.

A new points system and new qualifying rules were introduced last season but made no difference to the end result, even if the title race was closer.

Schumacher thinks the latest rule, forcing teams to use the same engine in practice, qualifying and the race, could ultimately play into his hands as well.

Ecclestone, recently quoted as saying he expects Finland's Kimi Raikkonen to win this year's championship, said Schumacher should keep driving as long as he wanted as he remained the biggest drawcard in the sport. *Reuters*

Montoya cool after walkout

MONTOYA

MELBOURNE—Fiery Colombian Juan Pablo Montoya was all smiles on Thursday as he faced the media without walking out or being asked to play golf with anyone's grandmother.

Montoya was furious on Wednesday when two comedians from a satirical Australian sports show interrupted a poorly attended news conference at a Melbourne racetrack by asking nonsensical questions.

By contrast, the Williams driver looked completely relaxed at another news conference before Sunday's Australian Grand Prix a day after he made headlines by angrily quitting an engagement with team sponsor Allianz.

But Montoya, a frontrunner to win the Formula One championship this year before joining McLaren in 2005, said he still failed to see the funny side of the incident and pinned the blame on event organizers.

"The sponsors can't really say anything because the sponsors were the guys who let them (the comedians) in," he said.

"They probably wanted to play a joke on me and it didn't work as planned." One, answering his mobile telephone as Montoya was speaking, asked the driver whether he would play a round of golf with his grandmother. The Colombian then brought an end to the proceedings and stalked off. *Reuters*

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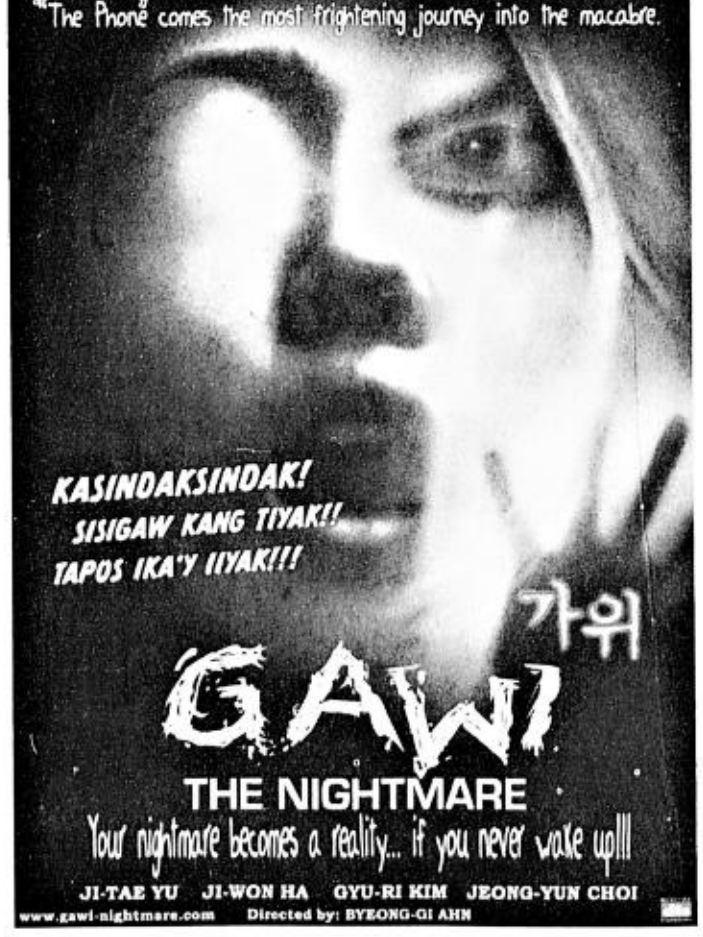

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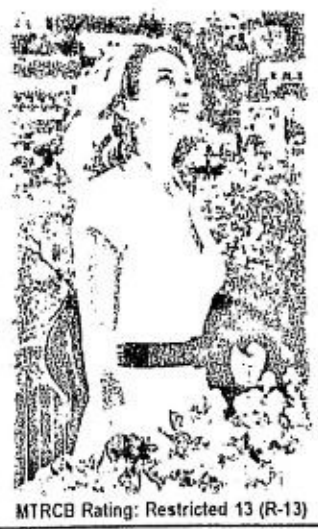
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MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)

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SPORTS

Selig puts gag on steroid talks

SAN FRANCISCO—Major League Baseball waited until this season to introduce meaningful steroid testing on players. It will take a bit longer before officials are comfortable with people talking about the subject.

Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig has issued a memo to all 30 clubs directing that all team officials and personnel stop talking about the BALCO Laboratories steroid scandal and nutritional supplements in general.

"For the same reason, we're asking (the players' union) to urge players to also refrain from further comments on the subject," major league spokesman Richard Levin said.

Lawyers have done more talking than players since a San Francisco Chronicle report Tuesday naming six players who federal investigators were told received steroids from Greg Anderson, the indicted personal trainer of Barry Bonds.

Bonds and New York Yankees stars Gary Sheffield and Jason Giambi were among those indentified as receiving steroids, although there is no proof they used them.

"We're not discussing that," Bonds said of the steroid topic Wednesday.

A lack of testing for substances that were then legal in baseball means that drugs, which were banned in the Olympics and American football, might have aided record-setting efforts and sports fans might never know for certain how tainted or legitimate recent home run records were.

Steroids have been the major talk of pre-season training camp, although baseball officials are hopeful the start of exhibition games will capture the focus instead of greater revelations about the BALCO case's impact on the game. *AFP*

Daly fights back

NEW YORK—The man with more monikers than PGA Tour titles, is still working on his epitaph.

After 37 years of hard living, some might consider that an achievement in itself. But it seems John Daly is not finished yet. As he flirts with one of the more touching of his comebacks, the double major winner has golf fans in the palm of his working man's hand.

Just last year, the idea of Daly the golfer looked dead and buried. Ranked outside the world's top 200, the American had 16 missed cuts, withdrawals or disqualifications from 22 Tour events in 2003.

His personal life was no more orderly. He learnt that his fourth wife, Sherrie, had been indicted on federal charges of laundering drug money just five days after the July birth of their son, John Daly II. The two filed to divorce each other in October.

Cynics will say he has raised hopes before. But for many neutral observers, the moment Daly won his first PGA title in nine years in a playoff at the Buick Invitational last month -- cheered on by Sherrie after their reconciliation -- was significant. A tearful Daly thought so. "It's the sweetest victory," he said. *Reuters*

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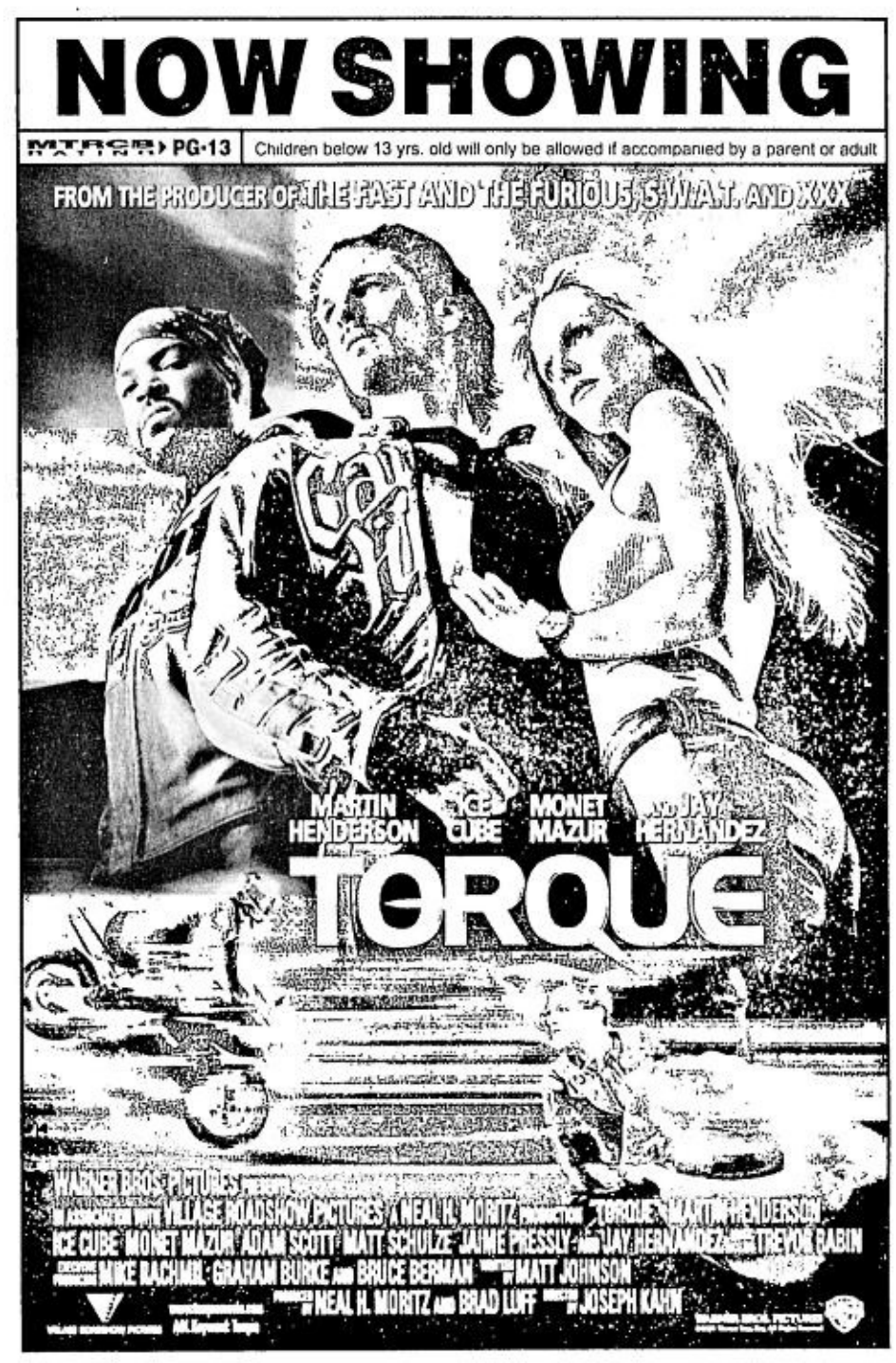
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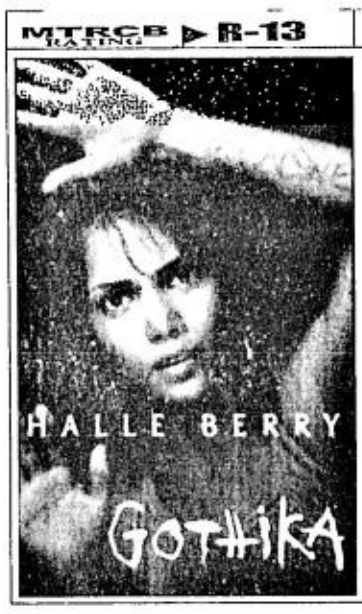

Ghost story is "scary as hell"

Vengeful ghost in 'GOTHIKA'

"Because she is dead doesn't mean she's gone..."

Academy Award®-winner Halle Berry stars in Columbia Pictures' spine-chilling horror thriller as Dr. Miranda Grey, a criminal psychologist who awakens to find herself a patient in her own mental institution with no memory of the murder she's apparently committed. Haunted by a vengeful female ghost, Miranda must find out if she is being led farther from her sanity or closer to the truth. *GOTHIKA* also stars Robert Downey Jr. and Penelope Cruz.

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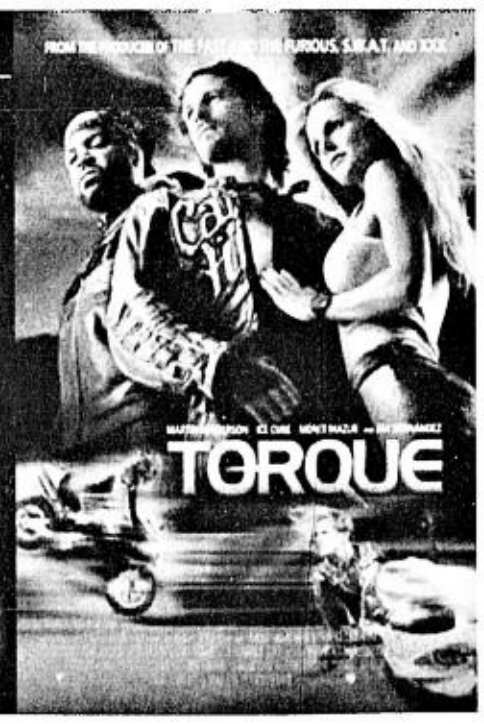

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Race 6--1 San Diego Force 2 High Fidelity/Proud Conquistador 3 Apple Splash

Race 7--1. Stormy Alydar 2. Silver Dollar 3 Skip Away 4. Lucky Beat 5. Western Dancer

Race 8--1. Doña Gelay 2. Red Strip 3. Arrivederci 4. Bella Firenze

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Stocks rise, peso steady on SC ruling

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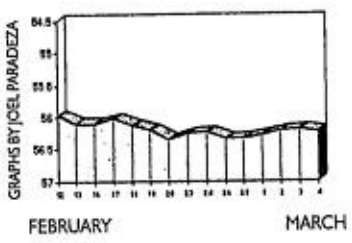

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 56.235 = $1
As of 5 p.m., March 4, 2004

¥ 110.16 = $1
As of 5 p.m., March 4, 2004

GOLD: $393.10-393.60
per ounce Hong Kong, March 4, 2004

March 4, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.818800	1.000000	56.2060
Japan	Yen	0.007441	0.009088	0.5108
United Kingdom	Pound	1.499632	1.831500	102.9413
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.105070	0.128322	7.2125
Switzerland	Franc	0.633943	0.774234	43.5166
Canada	Dollar	0.611593	0.746938	41.9824
Singapore	Dollar	0.478159	0.583976	32.8230
Australia	Dollar	0.607960	0.742501	41.7330
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.171998	2.652661	149.0955
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.218347	0.266667	14.9883
Brunei	Dollar	0.476767	0.582276	32.7274
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000096	0.000117	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020729	0.025316	1.4229
UAE	Dirham	0.222930	0.272264	15.3029
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.221300	68.6444
Argentina	Peso	0.281375	0.343643	19.3148
Brazil	Real	0.284404	0.347343	19.5228
Denmark	Kroner	0.134214	0.163916	9.2131
India	Rupee	0.018111	0.022119	1.2432
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.215502	0.263193	14.7930
Mexico	New Peso	0.074119	0.090522	5.0879
New Zealand	Dollar	0.544089	0.664496	37.3487
Norway	Kroner	0.115640	0.141231	7.9380
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014297	0.017461	0.9814
South Africa	Rand	0.118794	0.145083	8.1545
Korea	Won	0.000696	0.000850	0.0478
Sweden	Kroner	0.108320	0.132291	7.4355
Syria	Pound	0.015874	0.019387	1.0897
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024618	0.030066	1.6899

By Doris C. Dumlao

STOCKS rose and the peso was steady yesterday after the Supreme Court cleared the way for movie star Fernando Poe Jr. to run for president, easing concerns of mass protests if the popular action hero had been disqualified.

The Supreme Court's decision allowing actor FPJ to join the presidential race has eased the jittery foreign exchange market, which was anticipating civil unrest if the high tribunal ruled otherwise.

Former Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Gabriel Singson said it would have been worse for the local currency if the high court had disqualified FPJ as this might trigger riots and mass protests among the actor's supporters.

"This is good for the peso," Singson said, "Also, the latest SWS survey showed that (President) GMA is now leading, so it's also good for the market."

The peso opened at 56.20 yesterday, traded within a tight range of 56.185 and 56.25 before closing at 56.235 against the greenback.

A trader from a big commercial bank said, however, that only a break below 56.15 would suggest that the peso would gain further against the US dollar. The trader said it seemed that a near-term bottom for the dollar was in place at 56.15.

Stock trading continued to be thin, however, as investors remained wary ahead of the May 10 national elections, with polls showing FPJ and incumbent Macapagal-Arroyo neck-and-neck in the campaign for the presidency.

"The market's reaction, though positive, is subdued because the Supreme Court decision may not be that significant after all," said Eagle Equities president Joey Roxas. "The latest survey showed that President Arroyo has caught up and taken the lead."

The main stock index rose 11.07 points, or 0.76 percent, to 1,474.07, pulled by telecom leader Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) and its mobile unit Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel). The market is up 2.20 percent so far this year.

Government dollar bonds traded overseas gained on the court decision, but the peso was little changed near record lows.

PLDT, the nation's largest phone company, was the most active stock and ended up 1.61 percent or P15 at P945. Piltel, 45-percent owned by PLDT, jumped 13.7 percent or 20 centavos to P1.66. Ayala Land Inc., the country's leading property developer,

STOCKS/ B4

January exports up 4.1% from year ago to $2.84B

EXPORTS fell 10.4 percent in January from December 2003 on weak seasonal demand, but rose by 4.1 percent from the same period a year earlier as the economy struggled to ride a global pick-up in demand.

The National Statistics Office said yesterday export earnings fell to $2.84 billion in January from $3.18 billion in December.

It was the smallest export amount since May, but analysts noted that January and February were usually weak months following strong seasonal demand for exports in December.

The marginal growth in exports year-on-year has prompted Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri to order yesterday a review of January export data due to suspected under-reporting, the second time this year the government has ordered such a review.

"We are given the whole day to verify. If there is any revision, we will probably know by (today)," an official at the National Statistics Office said.

Officials at the statistics office said they would review whether they had captured all the export data for January from the automated export documentation system at the customs bureau.

Sluggish growth in exports has raised concern the economy, already handicapped by a weak peso and jitters ahead of the May 10 national elections, is slipping behind its neighbors and losing out to Chinese competition.

Song Seng Wun, regional economist at G.K. Goh Securities in Singapore, said the weak January performance could have resulted from fewer working days in China and Singapore as those countries celebrated Chinese New Year.

"Exports to these countries slowed down probably because of the long break," he said. "Exporters probably held back their shipments."

Song said the month-on-month fall was twice what he had expected, but he would stick to his projection of 10-15 percent export growth in 2004.

Exports, which make up two-fifths of gross domestic product, rose just 1.5 percent last year. Electronics exports, the biggest sector, fell 2.6 percent.

Electronics rose 1.2 percent

JANUARY/ B4

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

Women power in governance

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

COMMENTARY

THERE are three events related to women power and governance. This is especially important in the agricultural sector, which contributes 40 percent of our labor force today.

In 1989, the Samahan ng Kababaihan ng San Miguel, Bulacan (KBB), was cited as the best women's rural development project in the world by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Unifem). Women had achieved significant economic gains in integrated hog raising with a creative swine dispersal component, the planting of more than one million mango trees in the agricultural municipality of San Miguel and becoming the biggest stuff toys exporter in the country.

However, the KBB believed that the economic gains were limited by the town's prevailing male-dominated political governance. The late Emma Sta Ana, the KBB's chief organizer, decided to conduct a word association exercise with San Miguel's women leaders. Word association is a technique where a respondent must immediately say the first word that comes to his or her mind when another word is initially given.

Pigs to politics

When the word "politics" was mentioned, the women leaders responded with words like "dirty," "dishonest," "insincere," "selfish," and "inefficient." Emma asked them if they thought of male politicians during this exercise. When they said yes, Emma asked them to instead envision women politicians. This time, words like "clean," "honest," "sincere," "committed" and "effective" were associated with "politics."

Emma then challenged these women to go from pigs (which was their first significant economic venture) to politics (which they could transform into what it should be). The Center for Asia Pacific Women in Politics (Capwip), based in the Philippines, trained those who were interested to run in the barangay elections. During their first attempt, 80 percent of the women trained by Capwip won in their electoral bids.

The women in San Miguel believe that their political involvement resulted in better governance. This in turn has contributed significantly to the municipality's economic development.

Best in Asia Pacific

In Naga City, Camarines Sur, where more than half of the city's land is agricultural, a similar process of women empowerment in governance took place. Jean Llorin, a key resource person of Capwip, convinced a promising young lawyer, Mila Raquid Arroyo, to run for city councilor. Backed by the women's votes, her mandate was to ensure women's issues were mainstreamed in Naga City governance.

Upon her electoral victory, Arroyo worked for the approval and implementation of gender responsive city ordinances, policies and programs. In the agricultural area, priority is now given to families headed by women because of the husband's absence due to death or desertion. Because of these women's double burden in solely earning a livelihood and simultaneously raising a family, they are now given priority in the distribution of agricultural land and the provision of agricultural support services. Fifty percent of the city's livelihood assistance is likewise reserved for women. There is also an institutionalized woman's representative in all the city government's task forces and committees.

Because of these and other similar measures, last Feb. 15, the United Nations Habitat gave Naga City the award for being one of the top three cities in the entire Asia Pacific for gender responsive governance.

International perspective

Last week, from Feb. 26-28, the Capwip Institute for Gender, Governance and Leadership (CIGGL) conducted its first international Asia Pacific workshop "Making Governance Gender Responsive." Twenty female and male leaders from Cambodia, Bangladesh and the Philippines participated. As part of this workshop, Llorin and Arroyo discussed the women empowerment models in Naga City and San Miguel, Bulacan.

Nhim Van Chan Kan, the Cambodian delegation head, cited the achievement of her fellow delegate, Chan Sotheavy, who became a judge at 29 years old and now, three years later, is already a director in the Ministry of Justice. However, she said this was more the exception than the rule in Cambodia.

Chan Sipana of Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture lamented the very little women involvement in agricultural sector governance. She said that she would immediately implement the workshop learnings in making governance gender responsive when she returned to her homeland.

Farzana Naim from Bangladesh contributed a very valuable insight. She said that in developing agriculture-based countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia and the Philippines, it is good governance that can best address the main problem of poverty. In these countries, it is the women who are the main victims of this poverty. Given the globalization context, they are also the "first to be fired and the last to be hired."

Despite this, women play a very small role in governance in these countries. She suggests that increased women's leadership in this area will improve governance, and thus address the poverty problem more effectively.

Conclusion

March is Women's Month. It should not be limited to merely acknowledging women's contributions to society. Rather, following Capwip's thrust of making governance gender responsive, March should serve as a milestone when ordinances, policies and programs are approved and implemented to institutionalize the woman's leadership role in governance, especially in the agricultural sector.

With the internationally awarded examples of San Miguel, Bulacan and Naga City, Camarines Sur, serving as models for the country to follow, this milestone can certainly be achieved. More importantly, our main problem of poverty can more effectively be addressed with the increase of women power in governance.

(The author is chair of Agriwatch, a private sector initiative; former undersecretary of Agriculture and Trade and Industry and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agriwatch-phil@yahoo.com or telefax 02-8516635.)

PRULINK	PRU LIFE U.K.	
Investments of Variable Life Insurance Contracts	Current Week March 02, 2004	Last Week February 24, 2004
Bond Fund - Peso	1.09432	1.10426
Managed Fund - Peso	1.14899	1.15823
Bond Fund - US Dollar	0.9992	0.9912

* Note: These investments of variable life insurance contracts are [illegible] regulated by the Insurance Commission

BIR recommends stiffer penalties for tax evasion

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue wants stiffer penalties for tax delinquents saying that current laws do not pack enough punch to discourage people from cheating on their tax returns.

"We believe that the current provisions of the Tax Code are too lenient on tax delinquents, and so we are hoping for some revisions in the Tax Code that will impose higher penalties," said Deputy Commissioner Licerio Evangelista in an interview.

Tax evaders face a prison term of two to four years plus a fine ranging from P30,000 to P100,000 under the Tax Code.

On the other hand, those who refuse to settle their tax liabilities despite notices from the BIR face a prison term of one to 10 years and a fine of P10,000.

Evangelista said the BIR was hoping to increase the penalties to put more teeth into its drive against delinquent taxpayers, which would lead to improved revenue collection.

Faced with a huge budget deficit, the government tasked the BIR to collect P477 billion in revenue this year, 12 percent more than its 2003 collection target of P424 billion.

Evangelista said the BIR would make recommendations to Congress on how to strengthen the law against tax evasion.

Last year, the BIR filed tax evasion cases with the Department of Justice against five cell card distributors and two other firms.

Unpaid taxes ranged from P18 million to P4.3 billion.

The Metropolitan Trial Court of Manila issued an arrest warrant on Tuesday against TID International Inc., a cell card distributor of Globe Telecom and one of the firms charged by the BIR last year, for tax evasion amounting to over P400 million.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. earlier said the BIR was poised to bring more tax violators to court.

The BIR earlier reported that in the first half of 2003, about 85 percent of the firms it was monitoring under-declared their tax obligations. These firms included those belonging to the large taxpayers bracket and their clients.

The BIR detected the under-declarations through its new computerized auditing system called the Reconciliation of Listings for Enforcement (Relief).

Under the Relief system, a company's sales are matched with the purchases of its clients to detect discrepancies.

Café puts new twist to old favorite

By Corrie Salientes-Narisma

FEATURE

WHEN Hormel Foods Corp. of the United States tied up with PureFoods Corp. about four years ago, it knew it made good business sense to produce and sell its Spam luncheon meat in the country.

Little did the Hormel people expect that the Spam business here would spawn another venture, where its products would take the center stage.

Last week some of Hormel Foods' key people flew in to Manila to witness the birth of SpamJam Café, the first restaurant in the world dedicated solely to Hormel's Spam and other meat products, at the 2nd floor of Glorietta 4.

Hormel officials present during SpamJam's launch said this development was a step ahead of the others since other restaurants overseas were just starting to include Spam in their menus.

THE FIRST of the new worldwide franchise SpamJam Café opened at the 2nd level of Glorietta 4.

Craving

SpamJam Café is the baby of entrepreneur Philip Abadilla of Store Café, whose love for the famous luncheon meat inspired him to approach PureFoods-Hormel and present his idea of putting up an outlet that will carry Spam and its products.

It took him no time to convince PureFoods-Hormel to team up with his Store Café and put up SpamJam.

The first SpamJam fast-casual restaurant cost Abadilla and his partners P5 million but the proponents are convinced the idea will work and the first café will be followed by many others, at least two in the first semester of this year.

Abadilla believes there are others like him who crave for Spam and these people will be his market.

He is not worried that people will get tired of eating Spam and going to SpamJam. Abadilla says that he, with the help of his menu development team, is ready to keep his customers' appetite for his offerings by coming up with a hundred and one ways of preparing Spam meals.

"Remember Spam is meat, so there are an unlimited ways of preparing it," he says, stressing that SpamJam will change its theme every quarter. There will be oriental, European and Mediterranean preparations.

Menu offerings

For now, SpamJam Café offers to its diners carefully crafted meals that are perfectly attuned to the Filipino appetite.

The line is complete with appetizers such as the Spam Poppers and Spam nuggets that can make the customers dive into the rest of SpamJam Café's offerings. The Spam salad can be a good starter too.

Of course, the Filipinos' favorite preparation of a Spam meal—fried thick cuts of Spam placed over fried rice—tops SpamJam Cafe's menu.

The menu for this quarter includes big servings of Spam Club and Hero sandwiches, the Spam spaghetti and baked macaroni, and old favorites Spamburger and Hormel's premium Wranglers Frank on a bun.

A custom-formulated bread from the US called Dutch Crunch puts a special touch to these sandwiches. All these can be taken out in easy-to-carry packages.

Style

Abadilla designed SpamJam Café's take-out packaging to be movie-theater friendly. "The theme of our counter also portrays the movie theater façade. We do not want to limit our customers to the in-restaurant dining opportunity, we want to give our customers the option to enjoy their meals while watching their favorite movies."

He had the yuppies in mind as his target market when he decided to put up SpamJam Café, so he was pleasantly surprised to see clients from all walks of life, including children, coming to the restaurant.

Still in its first few days in the business, SpamJam Café is now grossing P30,000 a day. Abadilla has set a target of increasing it to at least P50,000 a day.

"We will be launching big promos later but we want to make sure first that our system is perfect and our offerings are complete," he says.

He said it took his group one and a half years to set up the first store, but Abadilla is confident that it would be easier to put up the next restaurants.

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REGIONAL EXPANSION

Smart eyes Indonesian carrier

By Clarissa S. Batino

SMART Communications Inc. yesterday said it was in exploratory talks to acquire or enter into joint ventures with foreign carriers.

These moves are in line with the plan of Smart's parent firm First Pacific Co. Ltd. to fortify its Asian investments.

"There are many things we are looking into including a regional expansion. But it is purely exploratory at this stage," explained Smart president and chief executive officer Napoleon Nazareno.

The Smart president said that the exploratory talks were "emanating" from First Pacific, which has more than a 20-percent stake in PLDT.

PLDT, in turn, owns cash-rich Smart and losing mobile phone carrier Pilipino Telephone Corp.

PLDT and Smart chair Manuel Pangilinan declined to comment directly on a regional newspaper report which said that Smart was interested in acquiring a controlling stake in an Indonesian operator.

Reports said that First Pacific was looking at Excelcomindo Pratama, Indonesia's third-largest mobile operator.

Telekomindo Primabhakti, which owns 60 percent of the company, reportedly wants to exit.

The stake is attracting interest from other regional players like Australia's Telstar Corp. and China Telecom.

"It is more than Indonesia, we are looking at several countries. The effort is being led by First Pacific. If the local unit has a role, then it would have to make a decision," Pangilinan said.

But no decision was likely to be made this year, according to Nazareno.

Analysts said that a regional expansion of First Pacific's local telecom unit would make sense as the Philippine market would eventually be saturated.

A country of 84 million has more than 8 million cellular phone subscribers.

Indonesia's population is three times bigger than the Philippines although the gross domestic product is lower per capita.

Analysts said that it helped that First Pacific was familiar to the Indonesian market as it controls Indofood.

Smart and Piltel have more than 13 million subscribers and the companies wanted to grow their customer base to 18 million this year.

Last year, Smart's P16.12 billion in net earnings allowed PLDT to post a net gain of P11.2 billion.

PLDT should improve its net earnings to between P17 billion and P18 billion and sustain its debt-reduction strategy this year.

Smart grew its profit by 160 percent to P9.92 billion from P6.2 billion in 2002 as its subscriber base, together with Piltel's Talk 'N Text hit almost 13 million in 2003 from 8.6 million the previous year.

Smart's 4,000 cell sites now cover about 67 million people nationwide or about 80 percent of the country's population

An end to a lifestyle of compromise... Ayala Land's newest residential project

Life, as you know it, has always been about finding the middle ground.

You don't want to rise before the sun to get to work on time or waste precious hours commuting to your workplace or lose your bearings racing with the rush-hour crowd. So you get a place nearby, one that is accessible to everything: the business district, malls, restaurants, churches, hospitals, schools. The downside: a hefty rent, perhaps, or an environment unkind to a growing family, where children are exposed to hostile elements and you all squeeze into cramped quarters. You have forgotten what a tree looks like. But you will save hours and you will get to work on time. You will certainly be less stressed out.

Maybe you decide you do want to settle close to nature and far from the madding crowd. You want your kids to play like you did when you were their age—climbing trees, swimming, eating freshly picked fruit with bare hands. You want a close knit environment where neighbors can become friends and are not merely familiar faces. The price? A long, arduous commute to the office or school that could add up to one or two months a year and could have meant quality time spent alone or with the kids.

The life you've always known is like a stool missing one leg—sit tight, balance properly, and you will manage, albeit an uncomfortable existence.

It is frequently said that you can't have it all. But what if somebody said you could?

Real estate leader Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) has always had the mindset of looking for ways to make people's lives better. They aim for innovation, not for innovation's sake but for the people.

At ALI, we say, yes, it is possible to have it all, and you don't have to pay a steep price.

Innovation at its peak

Striving to fill this need, ALI started a project with a lofty aim. "The objective is to create a peaceful community within the city," says ALI senior vice president Angela de Villa-Lacson, describing the beginnings of their newest residential development that will rise in a prime location within Bonifacio Global City.

"Our vision is to introduce a different lifestyle to our market, a development that is more people-oriented, a community where people interact with one another, a healthy environment."

A harbinger of a new lifestyle people only dream about till now, the ALI project is a highly innovative one in that it strives to meet people's needs—a safe and verdant environment to live and grow in without the hassles of a long commute, at a reasonable price. In other words, what it offers is , with variety in terms of unit design, the layout of the landscape and the entire development.

"We saw the need to create this project because a lot of people would rather live in a place with lots of open space," continues Lacson. "The thing is, many people can't afford it because it's either too far from their place of work or it's very expensive. In Makati, Forbes Park and nearby villages are conveniently located near the business district—but the cost of the house and lot is way beyond the means of most people."

The ALI answer to the challenge was to cull all the benefits that are scattered over many developments and to bundle them into one neat and abundant package, ending, in essence, the compromise people have had to deal with.

A new lifestyle

Combining all these elements into an organic whole, what the ALI project is able to offer is the lifestyle. "You live in a peaceful community. At the same time, you are close to nature. Since its location is within the city, you can conveniently travel from your home to your office," Lacson explains.

The development has an abundance of open space and gardens for residents both young and old to play, relax, stroll, lounge, or simply hang out. Amenities for sports and recreational activities abound and spread generously throughout, so that residents won't have to complain of overcrowding or jostle each other for use of the facilities.

A profusion of gardens with different themes will be scattered throughout the site—take your pick among flower patches, fruit orchards, kitchen herb patches. Residents will know once more what it's like to freely walk and run on lawns and gardens.

As for shopping, there is a retail center inside the development, not to mention Market! Market!, another ALI development, which is practically just a stone's throw away from the current development site.

Education is no problem either as several learning institutions such as the Japanese and British International Schools are in the vicinity. Residents can also learn "psychographically" since the development will provide much room for interaction and mingling. In addition, the site is located within Bonifacio Global City, a fast-rising business and technological district in the country, while the Makati Central Business District is a few minutes' drive away.

And because at the end of the day what's important for ALI is that people enjoy the benefits of this unique project, the price is reasonable, affordable and competitive with a variety of unit designs, making it appealing to a broad sector of the market, whether one is just making his or her way in the corporate world, a family-centered young urbanite couple wanting to or just starting to raise their own family, full nesters who have growing or grown children, empty nesters whose homes have grown too big for them, and retirees who want to be close to where the action is.

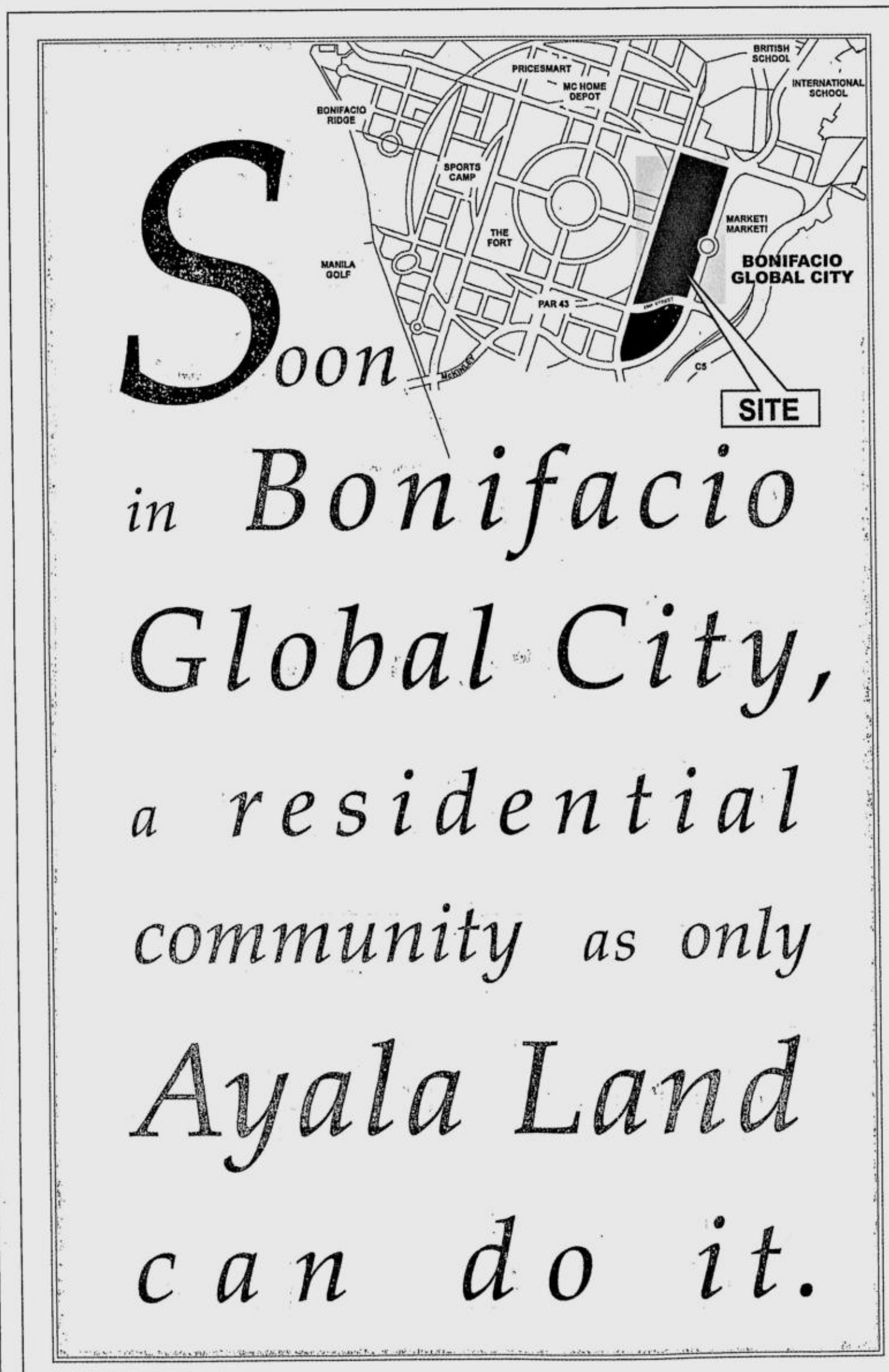
A simple kind of life

Now imagine this. You wake up, but unlike mornings of the past, you don't have to throw the sheets in a hurry, miss breakfast, or put on makeup in the car. Today, you could hit the snooze button if you want to. For breakfast, you and your kids head to the bakeshop at the corner for a batch of freshly baked pastries and a cup of brewed coffee or hot chocolate. After breakfast, you all decide to do a few laps in the swimming pool, keeping in mind that your meeting is still at nine but you don't worry, because driving to work will only take you a few minutes, and the kids have plenty of time to catch their bus.

At the end of the day, you eagerly go home to prepare a lovingly planned dinner or do homework with your children. On weekends, you and your friends can meet up and grab a few drinks and admire the view. Your children will know what grass feels like under their feet, the exhilaration of flying a kite, the tingle of fresh air through their lungs, and the sensation of dirt on their hands. You will have time, literally, to stop and smell the roses.

"This project can give its residents the nature experience, which is uncommon for busy people living in the city nowadays," says Lacson. "Children can enjoy the grass, pick flowers and even fruits. The parents can sit back, relax and simply enjoy the view. This development will give them the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of nature, and it's all in the city."

With ALI, this kind of life is not far behind.



An AYALA Community

A joint project of AYALA LAND, INC. and COMMUNITY INNOVATIONS, INC.

COMMUNITY INNOVATIONS INC. An AYALA Company

For announcement purposes only

ABS-CBN seen retiring bulk of ₱5.8B in debts in next 2 yrs

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. (ABS-CBN) is expected to retire the bulk of its outstanding debt worth P5.8 billion within the next two years.

Sources told the INQUIRER that P2.1 billion of the company's debt was scheduled to fall due this year, of which P1 billion would be paid this month and the balance to be paid within the year.

Another P2 billion will be settled in 2005. This will reduce the company's obligations to P1.7 billion by 2006. The bulk of its obligations will be paid with cash generated from operations.

A portion of the debt to be retired this year represents US$3.6 million owed to BNP Paribas.

Last year, BNP Paribas agreed to participate in the company's exchangeable notes facility agreement, that was executed with majority of the company's creditors. The agreement allowed ABS-CBN to convert its short-term debts into long-term debts.

As of September 2003, the company's cash stood at P1.7 billion but sources said the figure would change once its financial results were released.

ABS-CBN earlier said that despite the shelving of its $150-million global bond float, the company could still finance maturing debts as well as its capital expenditure this year using internally generated cash.

The bond float was earlier planned to broaden the company's sources of funding.

ABS-CBN deferred the bond float to avoid paying higher risk premium arising from recent unfavorable domestic events and political uncertainties that caused jitters among investors.

Portion of the offering's proceeds was supposed to be used by ABS-CBN as its contribution to the equity call of Beyond Cable, the surviving company of the Sky Vision-Home Cable.

Analysts earlier said that with the company's operating income, it could finance its capital expenditure and maturing debts next year without resorting to additional borrowing.

For the first nine months of the year, ABS-CBN reported a net profit of P888.8 million. Income from operations grew 69 percent to P1.88 billion as of the nine-month period from P1.1 billion during the same month last year.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 4, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	33,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46	46	46	46	159,900
China Banking Corp.	650	650	650	650	1,170
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38	38.5	38	38.5	7,800
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.55	0.58	0.55	0.58	400,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	25.5	25.5	25	25.5	102,000
Phil. Savings Bank	27	27	27	27	20,600
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	2,400
Security Bank Corp.	16.75	17	16.75	17	4,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	26	26	26	26	1,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	200,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	160	160	155	155	2,090
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1505	1505	1505	1505	780
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23	23	23	23	600
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.68	0.69	0.68	0.68	3,770,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	875	875	860	860	43,140
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.037	0.037	0.037	100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	7,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.48	1.66	1.48	1.66	19,295,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	950	955	945	945	59,870
Ivantage Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	340,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	5,700,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	20.25	20.25	19.75	20	94,000
Manila Electric Co. B	32.5	33.5	32	32	540,700
Petron Corp.	3.15	3.15	3.1	3.15	1,718,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.18	2.18	2.18	2.18	18,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.94	0.9	0.91	1,390,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	1,550,000
William,Gothong & Aboitiz	2.65	2.65	2.5	2.5	8,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	1.34	1.4	1.34	1.4	2,404,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	68,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30	30	30	30	30,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19	19	18.75	18.75	98,500
RFM Corp.	0.63	0.63	0.62	0.63	50,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	57	56.5	57	120,200
San Miguel Corp. B	69.5	69.5	69	69.5	178,300
Universal Robina Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	60,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	150,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6	6	5.9	5.9	2,587,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	40,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	100,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1	1	1	1	100,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	20,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	300,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.59	0.61	0.59	0.59	2,680,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1	1	1	370,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	24	24.25	23.75	23.75	487,200
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.86	1.86	1.86	1.86	20,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	80,000
Medco Holdings	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	8,500,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.08	1.12	1.08	1.1	2,878,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	1,780,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	10,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13.25	13	13.25	15,900
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	100,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Lmg Chemicals Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	146,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	3,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	93,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	30,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.48	0.51	0.48	0.51	780,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.22	150,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	50,000
Manila Jockey Club	9	9	9	9	5,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23	23	23	23	221,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
OTHERS					
Faf Eastern University	400	400	400	400	470
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.6	2,585,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	50,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.135	0.17	0.135	0.17	9,610,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.215	1,050,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.08	3,270,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.02	2.02	2	2.02	133,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	5,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.1	3,572,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	6,000,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	500,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	1,020,000
Omico Corp.	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	4,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	80,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.0032	0.003	0.0032	10,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	400,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	20,000

BREWERY, SOFT DRINK BOTTLING

SMC expanding business in Vietnam

SAN MIGUEL Corp. (SMC) is looking at expanding its food and beverage business in Vietnam, encouraged by that country's economic prospects.

SMC is currently seeking the Vietnamese government's approval for the increase in its beer production capacity to 1 million hectoliters or roughly 13 million cases, from the current 200,000 hectoliters or 2.6 million cases.

In a recent state visit to Vietnam, Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Domingo Albert had brought up to Vietnamese officials SMC's request for increased beer production capacity and authority to import flavors for carbonated softdrinks.

Sources told the INQUIRER that SMC was in talks with Coca Cola Co. of Atlanta for the possibility of taking over the latter's interest in a wholly-owned subsidiary Coca-Cola Vietnam. Coca-Cola Atlanta has expressed interest in selling its stake in the Vietnam bottling plant.

SAN MIGUEL headquarters in Ortigas

Coca-Cola Atlanta has yet to announce its selling price for the Vietnam company but sources said SMC would consider acquiring a "large stake" in the Vietnam firm (80-90 percent) at the right price.

SMC and Coca-Cola Atlanta are partners in Philippine bottler Coke Philippines with an ownership sharing of 65 percent-35 percent.

Separately, Secretary Albert said that should SMC's request to increase beer production be approved, it will encourage SMC to further grow its operations in that country. SMC, at present, accounts for more than half of the total Philippine investments in Vietnam.

Vietnam's gross domestic product is expected to grow between 7.5 and 8 percent this year on higher export revenues.

Vietnam's economy grew by 6.9 percent in 2001 , 7.1 percent in 2002, and at about 7.25 percent for 2003, earlier reports indicated.

In the food segment, SMC signed in late October last year a share purchase agreement with the Taiwan Tea Corp. to acquire the latter's 100-percent share in TTCV Investment (BVI) Co. Ltd., a livestock raising and feed milling firm in Vietnam for US$ 35.5 million.

The company is San Miguel's first acquisition of a food business in Vietnam. With TTC (Vietnam), SMC aims to fast track its venture into the country's basic and processed meat market and keep a foothold on the growing animal and aquatic feeds market.

SMC continues to pursue its regional expansion efforts in seven countries such as China, Australia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ChinaBank sees 2.3% profit growth in '04

By Doris C. Dumlao

CHINA Banking Corp. is projecting a 2.3 percent growth in net profit this year on the back of a stronger lending expansion.

In an interview with INQUIRER, ChinaBank vice chair and chair of executive committee Hans Sy said the target for this year was presented to the bank's board in its meeting Wednesday.

"The driver will be loan expansion," Sy said, noting that banks could no longer rely much on earnings from treasury activities as local interest rates had started increasing.

"One of the best things about Chinabank's position is the provision of bad loans that we were able to push before," Sy said.

He said any loan account that the bank was able to restructure in the past could likewise contribute to interest income this year.

The expansion in lending is expected to compensate for the decline in earnings from the trading of government securities.

Another bank official said ChinaBank could still slow down on loan provisioning this year and still have one of the highest loan coverage ratio.

The bank posted a net income of P2.63 billion in 2003 from P2.59 billion a year ago.

Its return on equity remained one of the highest in the industry at 18.01 percent while return on assets stood at 2.47 percent in the same period.

Last year, however, the bank relied more on fee-based revenues from government securities trading, along with contributions from consumer banking and trust operations as demand for loans was flat.

Branch banking operations also contributed significantly through significant increase in customer base and offering of fee-based services.

Puyat heirs withdraw offer to GSIS Family Bank

By Michelle V. Remo

THE HEIRS of Sen. Gil Puyat Sr. withdrew their P3.1-million settlement offer with the GSIS Family Bank after the latter deferred the return of over 300,000 shares of stocks in various companies held by the late senator.

David So, speaking for the Puyats, said they took back on Wednesday (through a representative) the P1.2-million down payment earlier made by the Puyats to settle their dispute with GSIS Family Bank over the contested shares.

"When they (GSIS Family Bank) failed to return the shares to the Puyats, as what was agreed upon by both parties last month, we decided to withdraw the settlement," said So in an interview.

Last month, the Puyats and GSIS Family Bank agreed to enter into a compromise settlement where the Puyats would pay the face value of the loans owed by the Puyat estate to GSIS Family Bank. The bank will, in exchange, return the shares to the Puyats.

The 345,717 contested shares owned by the Puyat estate were pledged in 1980 to 1983 to Royal Savings Bank (renamed ComSavings Bank in 1984 and is now the GSIS Family Bank) to secure P5.1 million worth of loans.

The Puyat estate included the defunct Puyat Steel, the Gonzalo-Puyat Furniture and the Loyola subsidiaries, Loyola Life Plan and the Loyola Memorial Chapel.

The Puyats failed to settle the loan. However, they claim that GSIS Family Bank has no right over the shares because it failed to foreclose the pledged shares within a 10-year period.

Citing a provision of the Civil Code, the Puyats say they remain to be the rightful owners of the shares because failure to foreclose pledged assets within 10 years after a loan's maturity takes away the right of a bank to take possession of the assets.

GSIS Family Bank said its board decided to further study the matter before letting go of the shares and before fully accepting the P3.1-million settlement offer.

DISCLOSURES

CHINA Banking Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 6, 4 p.m. at the penthouse of ChinaBank Building, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of April 14 will be entitled to vote at the meeting.

* * *

INTERPHIL Laboratories Inc. bought 40,000 of its own shares at P1.90 each.

* * *

ATR Kim Eng Financial Corp. transferred its offices from the 17th to the 8th floor of Tower One and Exchange Plaza, Ayala Triangle, Makati City.

* * *

A.SORIANO Corp.'s 220,000 shares were bought by its wholly owned subsidiary, Anscor Consolidated Corp.

* * *

THE LISTING of additional 31,375 common shares of **First Philippine Holdings Corp.** brought total shares under the company's executive stock option plan and employee stock purchase plan to over 9.489 million. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

STI acquires stake in Bancommerce

SYSTEMS Technology Institute (STI), owned largely by businessman Eusebio Tanco, has acquired about 20-percent stake in Bank of Commerce through a deal involving shares previously held by the trust fund of College Assurance Plans.

A statement issued by the bank said STI, through its trust fund, acquired the common and preferred share holdings of CAP in Bancommerce.

The agreement between CAP and STI, according to the same statement, entailed the acquisition by CAP of STI's "Gift of Knowledge Certificates." Under the terms of agreement, CAP subscribed to STI's bond issue in exchange for its preferred and common share holdings in the Bancommerce. The certificates effectively fixed the future cost of education at current prices. It will enable CAP to manage any future hikes in tuition fees for its scholars, which is estimated at about 8 percent yearly.

One of the bond's features is that the tuition fees will be pegged at today's prices for the next six years or throughout the life of the bond.

As the deal involves the shares of Bancommerce, the implementation of the agreement takes effect upon receipt of the final approval from the Monetary Board and the PDIC.

January exports up . . .

From page B1

year-on-year in January to $1.928 billion.

The economy's resilience will be tested to the full in the coming months during a potentially volatile and violent campaign.

Political uncertainty has shunted the peso to record lows against the dollar around 56.30, making the country's goods more competitive, but economists said this was not all good news for exporters.

"The weaker peso is a double-edged sword," said AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan. "A weak peso could result in higher interest rates, which can raise cost of production."

Analysts and business executives have said a government projection of 10-percent export growth for 2004 was achievable given the current recovery in the global electronics industry.

After brushing with recession early last year, the economy has entered a mild recovery, driven mainly by healthy agriculture growth and consumer spending.

It posted GDP growth of 4.5 percent in 2003 and the government is forecasting growth of up to 5.8 percent in 2004.

Beyond electronics, key Philippine exports are textiles, clothing, coconut oil, furniture and tropical fruit. Its major markets are the United States, Japan, Hong Kong, the Netherlands and Malaysia. *Reuters*

Meralco to start last phase of refund

By Abigail L. Ho

MANILA Electric Co. will be filing next week with the Energy Regulatory Commission its proposed scheme for the last phase of the P30-billion refund for overcharges, which involve commercial and industrial customers.

Meralco refund task force chief Leonardo Mabale said in a telephone interview yesterday that the proposal would involve a two-pronged approach: crediting to the customers' future bills and the issuance of "refund notes" to commercial and industrial customers.

He explained that, up to a certain volume of kilowatthour (kWh) usage, customers will have their refund credited to their future bills.

Those exceeding the volume cut-off could either have the refund credited to future bills or get it in the form of financial instruments, he added.

However, he said the Lopez-led firm was still determining the best possible way of implementing the fourth and last phase of the refund, as this could impact adversely on the company's cash flow.

"The refund is still a top priority because it's a commitment, but we're also worried about our cash flows. We'll be closely monitoring refund activities and other cash outlays in the second quarter," he told the INQUIRER.

"We're really studying the fourth phase of the refund. We're having some difficulties in terms of funds because of the Supreme Court TRO. We were forced to delay some refinancing because of that," he said.

The court earlier issued a temporary restraining order on Meralco's 12-centavo-per kwh hike.

He said Meralco was even considering accelerating the implementation of the last phase of the refund from July 2005 to May 2005, but this might be difficult to do because of the Supreme Court order.

Stocks rise, peso steady

From page B1

rose 3.70 percent or 20 centavos to P5.60.

Analysts said the market was likely to drift between 1,450 and 1,500 in the near-term given the lack of corporate news and political uncertainty.

RCBC Securities analyst Edwin Gil said investors were also waiting for an inflation report due today.

"Market players will look at the inflation figures for February as this could provide guidance on the likely direction of interest rates and the peso as well," Gil said.

The central bank has said it expected consumer prices to rise 3.4 to 3.6 percent in February due to higher oil prices, compared to January's 3.4 percent rise. ***With a report from Reuters***

Mr. John's panciteria

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

TAIPAN John Gokongwei Jr. is venturing into the Chinese fast-food business.

A prototype, Mr. Choi Kitchen, is already drawing lunchtime crowds at the new wing of Robinsons Galeria on Ortigas with its Hong Kong-style menu and competitive prices.

Mr. Choi, incidentally, refers to one of the two chefs imported by the Gokongweis from the Chinese territory to set up and supervise marketing, supply, kitchen and quality controls for the venture.

Unlike the traditional panciterias of greasy bowls and sweaty cooks in white, collarless T-shirts, Mr. Choi's chefs and their assistants are garbed in proper uniform, topped with toques.

And, unlike, say, the successful Chow King of the listed Jollibee Group, Mr. Choi is targeting a middle class, higher market with its full-waiter service. The wait staff all carry wireless, PDA-style gadgets where they punch in the orders direct to the kitchen and accounting.

Even the restaurant décor has a decidedly upscale café feel with its bold orange and brown color motif.

The upscale part may be a bit overdone, though, as far as the price for its bottled water is concerned. Mr. John was himself ticked to see the P38 bill for the Summit bottled water served to him.

The taipan, who observed that the served bottled water is adequate for two persons, is now coming out with his own bottled-water brand, Refresh, with single-serve sizes.

Summit, incidentally, is owned by another taipan, Lucio Tan.

According to the grapevine, Mr. Choi will initially branch out to the Gokongwei-owned Robinsons malls but will later on set up either stand-alone restaurants or branches right next to a Mini Stop, the 24-hour grocery chain that Gokongwei also controls.

Mini Stop, in two years' operation, has already swamped Seven-11, the pioneering 24-hour grocery chain captained by Erap-Poe economic adviser Jose Pardo.

But that, as they say, is another story.

Yes, yes, Nanette

BANCO Filipino vice chair Albert "Bobby" Aguirre lost the foreclosure case he filed in Seattle on the home-for-the-aged business set up by his younger sister Nanette.

According to an eyewitness, the jury on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila) reached a unanimous verdict in less than an hour of deliberations in deciding to throw out Bobby's suit.

Bobby, the administrator of the Aguirre estate, claimed the $2 million ($4 million now, with interest, per Bobby's claim) used by Nanette and her American husband to set up a home-for-the-aged in a Seattle suburb was a loan from the Aguirre companies that has gone unpaid.

Despite initiating the suit, Bobby never appeared for the trial proper, but relied on two Aguirre executives, one of whom is former Mindoro Occidental Rep. Ma. Amelita Villarosa, to testify on his behalf.

Villarosa's credibility, unfortunately for Bobby, was impeached after Nanette's lawyer Robert Banks introduced a Philippine Supreme Court decision. That decision, written by Chief Justice Hilario Davide, unseated Villarosa for "bad faith and malice" in misappropriating her husband's initials to win votes for her during the closely contested 1998 election in her district.

Nanette, on the other hand, testified that her father in his final years wanted her to be secure in the United States because, as Banks explained, "the Philippine legal system would not be able to protect her from her feuding brothers," referring to Bobby and Adolfo.

In any case, the $2 million pales in comparison to the $400-million estate that Tomas Aguirre left at the time of his death.

The Seattle trial took only five days of daily hearings. In contrast, the Parañaque probate hearings for the Aguirre estate has dragged on for eight years, with the trial still stuck in the discovery phase and the judge even being ordered by the Supreme Court to continue the hearings despite his formally asking for a replacement.

Heard through the grapevine

MUHIBBAH Engineering of Malaysia and Keolis of France are the two foreign contractors that have been tapped by the new group that has taken over the George Go contract to rehabilitate the Alabang viaduct and extend the South Luzon Expressway up to the Star Expressway in Sto. Tomas, Batangas.

(E-mail: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Gov't to decide on fare hike, diesel price cut today

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MACAPAGAL administration will announce today whether or not transport groups' demand for higher fares and lower fuel prices would be granted.

Officials of jeepney groups who met with transport officials yesterday said that another nationwide strike would be launched next week if their demands were not met.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said that the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board would decide today whether or not to grant the P1 provisional increase sought by jeepney groups.

By today, he said Energy Secretary Vincent Perez would also give his feedback as to whether oil companies had agreed to reduce diesel prices in the provinces by at least P1 a liter.

Jeepney operators and drivers have asked the LTFRB for an increase of P2 for the first 5 km. At the same time, they sought an interim fare adjustment of P1 for the first 5 km. Bus groups had petitioned for a similar increase but have yet to ask for a temporary relief.

Mendoza met with officials of the Federation of Drivers and Jeepney Operators of the Philippines or Fejodap, the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide or Piston, the Philippine Confederation of Drivers Organization-Alliance of Concerned Transportation Operators or PCDO-Acto, the Alliance of Transport Operators and Drivers Association or Altodap, and the Makati Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association or Mjoda.

Jeepney groups said that the LTFRB had no basis to deny their petition for a fare increase because fuel prices have jumped alongside the prices of spare parts.

Diesel, which fuels most public transport, is now worth about P17 to P18 a liter. It had gone up by 43 percent in the last two years.

Oil companies have opened selective outlets that gave a P2.10 per liter discount on diesel within Metro Manila. Mendoza said provincial groups were seeking a P1 cut in diesel prices.

But Piston wanted a rollback to P12.60 per liter or the level in year 2000 when crude oil was at $31 per barrel compared to $29 per barrel now. Fejodap said it was amenable to a rollback in diesel to P15.50 per liter nationwide.

"Jeepney groups are asking why the government had allowed the LRT to increase its fare twice already but had not granted public transport a fare hike since year 2000," said Orlando Marquez, chair of Mjoda.

The LTFRB had never issued a provisional fare increase since it started operating in 1987. The Office of the Solicitor General, the government agency representing the public in the issue of fare increases, said that the provisional fare increase jeepney groups were pressing was unjustified and untimely.

The problem with a provisional increase in public transport fare was that if in case there was a need to refund because the approved hike was lower, it would be impossible to return the fares of the commuters, according to an LTFRB official.

RP trade with East Asia pushed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry yesterday said it was stepping up efforts to help develop the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area as Mindanao exports to the other member countries reached a total of $99.6 million or about P5.4 billion last year.

DTI documents showed that exports to Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia from Southern Mindanao reached $44 million or about P2.4 billion in 2003.

At the same time, the agency said yearly exports to the same countries from Northern and Western Mindanao reached a total of $55.6 million or P3 billion.

Northern Mindanao exports comprised canned pineapple products while Western Mindanao shipped marine and agricultural products.

"We have to be aggressive in pushing the BIMP-Eaga agenda to work," Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said. "By opening borders and increasing available infrastructure, we are opening more opportunities for trade and investments."

Purisima said his visits to Davao and Jogjakarta in Indonesia showed that need for more government intervention to push the BIMP-Eaga agenda.

The official said DTI offices had been tasked to put their plans and programs in the agenda, which include the country's proposal to host the 9th BIMP-Eaga working group meeting on air linkages and uniform port tariff agreement; port tariffs and port procedures; and a memorandum of understanding on strategic and economic cooperation between Sulawesi (Indonesia) and Mindanao.

Earlier this week, sea traffic between General Santos City and Bitung City in Indonesia was opened in a bid to increase trade and tourism in the area.

In a briefing last month, Purisima said the level of trade between Mindanao and Indonesia had gone up due to the tuna business.

"A lot of our tuna businessmen operate on both sides of the border—General Santos and Manado in Indonesia," the official said. "Bitung City is 47 km from Manado."

He added that the sea link complemented the General Santos-Manado air route, where Indonesia's Marpati Air runs two flights each week.

It would be a pity if you didn't look at the Lange 1 movement with a magnifying glass.

But you certainly don't need one to read its patented outsize date.

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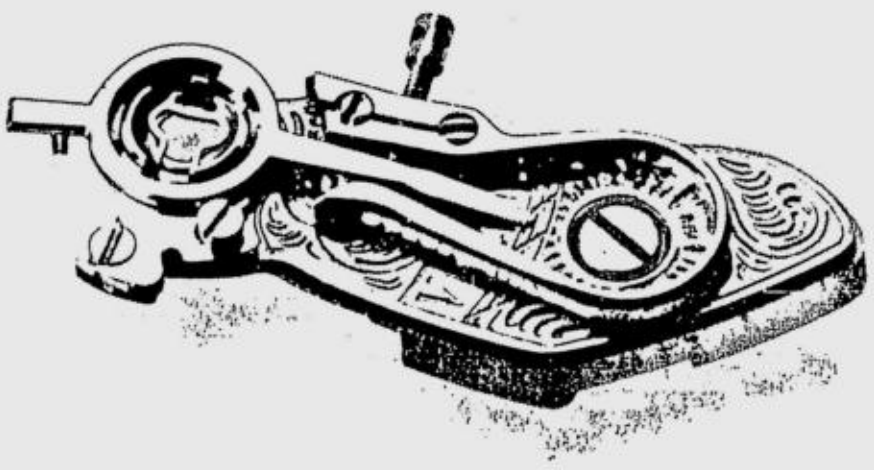

The Lange 1 with outsize date.
One of mechanical watchmaking's most strikingly useful inventions allows for a date display three times the size of those on conventional wristwatches. The patented double-disc mechanism with over 40 individual components may be the most significant contemporary watchmaking innovation. This mechanism, and the distinctive twin mainspring barrels for three day's power reserve with indicator, makes for an unprecedented watchmaking masterpiece. The Lange 1 is available in 18-carat gold or in platinum.

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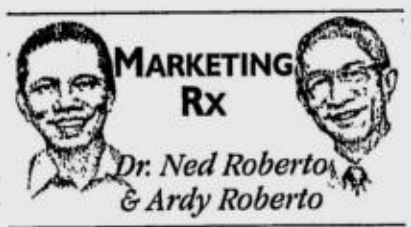
The price is right?



THIS PAPER really has the best readers in the world! Thanks for all your comments and questions. We can't reply immediately to all of your questions and requests but we will try to cover some of them in this column.

Let's fire off some quick answers to questions on our Feb. 20 (painless price increases):

Is pricing a social responsibility of marketers?

"Is it right to increase price during crisis? My customers are price sensitive."—May Buenacosa

If you're willing to absorb the increase of your cost in doing business and remain profitable, then by all means, don't increase your prices, especially during "crisis." (But remember, in the Philippines, we are always in "crisis.") This social responsibility issue perennially faces the likes of Petron, Caltex and Shell, and, Meralco. Marketers who supply parents with school supplies and books, I think, have some social responsibility as well when it comes to pricing. You did not mention what product you sell, but our consumer coping studies show that people who are faced with price increases either (a) bear the increase and continue buying the brand you market, (b) replace or substitute the brand, or (c) stop buying the brand or product all together.

The informal survey we did two columns ago reflects the consumer coping mechanisms, mentioned above, to crisis or price increases. One reader said, "I have stopped buying INQUIRER one day a week because of the recent increase to P18." The same reader said if this paper increased its price again by another P2, he would stop buying and instead read the Web version, Inq7.net.

In Cebu, our coping study shows that when it comes to deodorant, over 30 percent of the DE consumers resort to letter "c"—they stop buying to cope with the hard times. So would it be "right" to increase the prices of your deodorant in times of crisis? This country would have to face another kind of smelly crisis if that were to happen. Tell us about it.

Would it be right for Coca-cola to increase their prices during crisis when the poor use their product as a substitute "ulam" or viand? (Our coping study shows that the poor mix Coke, or toyo, or pork lard with their rice—that is a meal for them. On good days, they will have Lucky Me! cooked and mixed with cheap .vegetables and an egg—to feed a family of five.) If Coca-cola did increase their prices, would it be right for the five-star hotels to increase the selling price of Coke in their lobbies, which already starts at P100 to P150? Tell us about it.

Marketers can charge premium prices as part of their positioning and market segmentation strategy and not feel bad about it because part of their profits goes to a "cause." (Check out the Body Shop's positioning. It basically says to us, "We sell relatively expensive, all natural products sourced from third world countries at a good profit but at least we give back some of that profit to the third world country where it was made.") Call it Robin Hood marketing. Profiting from the rich, to give back and help the poor. In a future column, perhaps we'll write about cause related marketing.

One big price increase

"Your column, 'How to do painless price increases' is right dead-on. It works to affect one big price increase rather than a series of small ones. Amazingly, our patrons tend to stay loyal with our products that way. Keep up the valuable information. More power!"—Fred Tongco

We don't know what product Mr. Tongco markets, but since he expressed "amazement" at their customer's loyalty despite their one big price increase, most likely Mr. Tongco stumbled into this particular "law" of pricing. Again, to find out at what price your customers will continue to buy your products, ask them at what price they will stop buying your products. (For those who just said, "huh?" after reading this, please read last week's column by going to www.Inq7.net/money.)

Low priced competition

"We are maintaining a high price for our brand because of quality and brand equity. We are also trying to maintain sales growth. Our problem is that cheaper competitors are coming in and our trade customers are asking us to reduce price. Should we reduce price? How should we solve this problem?"—Worried Marketer

Don't worry. (As Bro. Eddie would say, "Sabi ng Bible it's a sin to worry!") Anyway, start by checking which of the low priced competitors are gaining sales. If these are competitors who have minimum acceptable quality in their products, then you can conclude even without research that they are drawing consumers whose priority product values are "low price first." (As long as there's minimum quality in the cheap products that are attracting them.)

Then check how much lost sales these low priced competitors with a minimum amount of product quality are causing your brand. These lost sales will level off after some time. What you're left with are the consumers whose priority product values are the opposite of those who went over to the low priced competitor products. Their priority places high quality as the first consideration in the brand they buy and price is just secondary. These consumers define your premium market segment where your brand leads and has its equity. A premium market segment is nice to own. This is because it derives its market size not from its population size but from its higher usage frequency, its larger amount bought or used, and the higher price that it pays. These multipliers can make a low population size-premium segment count as a multiple of a large population size-low priced segment. (See the senior MRx's book, "Strategic Market Segmentation.") *(To be continued next week.)*

* * *

The senior MRx, Dr. Ned Roberto, will be teaching a session on positioning and how to do market segmentation correctly at the DM/CRM Forum this March 9 and 10 at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel. Call 813-2732/03 or email dmforum@edsamail.com.ph for more info.

The last word on pricing goes to this loyal INQUIRER reader who texted her response to our informal survey on this paper's price increase:

"Gud am! I'll never stop buying PDI. E2 na dyaryo ko since dalaga pa. Now I'm a homemaker w/ 3 kids and my hubby wants to switch which I hate. I forego merienda just to have my PDI. Here in Laguna it's already P20. Thanks."—Mrs. Manalo

* * *

For comments or questions, email at MarketingRx@SaltandLightVentures.com. We'll be relaunching our new text-in cell number in next week's column. The MRx cell phone we used two columns ago was stolen!

Sun Tzu's 'Art of War' in marketing

By Karen V. de Asis
Contributor

THE TUMBLING peso and political uncertainty that wraps the nation until immediately after May 10, 2004 has caused many less spirited businessmen to maintain a status quo in managing their business.

The savvy businessman recognizes that while the political environment poses a threat, this should not deter him from exploring alternative opportunities.

The great military strategist and ancient Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu whose classic treatise, "The Art of War," which was translated in several languages, has stated, "One does not rely on the enemy not attacking but relies on the fact that he himself is unassailable." This means that, despite peaceful or turbulent times, the true commander, in this case the entrepreneur, forges ahead by relying heavily on one's inner strength. The real leader prefers to innovate than stagnate, lead rather than follow, initiate rather than cower with malcontent and studies the terrain rather than depend on hearsay or baseless information. Doing so, the great leader who is likely the astute businessman increases his firm's competitive advantage, value and effectiveness whether in moments of stability or instability.

When applied to marketing, Sun Tzu's art of war and military principles may lead to the following marketing strategies.

Competition

Sun Tzu's military strategy espouses the practical art of war, "where the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting." Instead of spending time and effort trying to kill competition, smaller players band together, hence, drawing on each other's strengths while at the same time masking each other's weaknesses. The One World Alliance, launched in February 1999, is an alliance of several airlines that aims to serve international travel requirements across different regions without the traveler individually making arrangements with separate airline companies. Under it, a traveler can fly routes from Asia to Latin America to Northern Europe, United States, Ireland, etc. while centralizing arrangements with a One World Alliance staff. Airline travelers enjoy the same privileges across all participating airlines.

Successful competition, also known as co-branding or co-marketing, hinges on knowing and understanding your partners' intent as well as maintaining mutual transparency in business dealings.

Counter offense

Sun Tzu writes, "If we wish to fight, the enemy can be forced to an engagement even though he be sheltered behind a high ramp and deep ditch. All we need to do is to attack some other place that he will be obliged to relieve. If the enemy is the invading party, we can cut his line of communications and occupy the roads by which he will have to return; if we are the invaders, we may direct our attack against the sovereign himself."

The local businessman is under siege from global players. Global free trade made possible by the GATT, Afta and WTO has leveled the playing field. Local players, to remain competitive, must learn to wage the war in global markets.

San Miguel Corp. which first sold beer in 1890 is making inroads in North and South Asia, Australia, Middle East, Africa and the US.

Retail apparel Bench, first marketed in 1987, has franchise outlets in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Guam, Canada, United Arab Emirates and China.

The Figaro Coffee Co., a local coffee chain known for its freshly roasted coffee blends including the uniquely Filipino Barako blend, is now in Hong Kong and plans to open chains in Vietnam and China.

Goldilocks, which sold its first baked products 36 years ago, has outlets in California, Canada and Las Vegas.

Liwayway Marketing Corp.'s Oishi brand of snacks is making a lot of headway in China, Vietnam and Brunei.

Fortify

Sun Tzu relates, "Unhappy is the fate of one who tries to win his battles and succeed in his attacks without cultivating the spirit of enterprise, for the result is waste of time and general stagnation. The enlightened ruler lays his plans well ahead; the good general cultivates his resources."

Luck, Divine Providence or simply being there at the right time and right place, are some of the cited reasons why certain businesses have flourished. Unfortunately, the same naiveté has caused many of these businesses their downfall. Greed, lack of vision, absence of an enterprising, innovative spirit and serious commitment to sustain the business moves the company to stagnation and general decline. Not so, with committed business leaders, who strive to strengthen their current businesses as well as look ahead at opportunities for future sources of profitability.

Coke is a 118-year-old brand. Today, it has a brand value of $70.45 billion based on Interbrand's valuation report.

The brand remains at the forefront by recognizing opportunities and threats arising from the macro-environment, moving to adapt itself to the changes and challenges. For example, realizing the rising number of consumers favoring healthy beverages, Coke has introduced extensions, Diet Coke and Coke Light. It has also developed and acquired a stable of other healthy drinks like Minute Maid, Fruitopia, Hi-C, Powerade, etc.

Flank attack

According to Sun Tzu, "An army may march great distances without distress if it marches through country where the enemy is not. You can be sure of succeeding in your attacks if you only attack places that are undefended."

A flank attack becomes successful when there is a gap in the needs of the present market and not one among the existing players are able to serve the need well. Chowking's founder Robert Kuan related in a symposium how despite political adversity in 1985, he was able to build Chowking knowing that there is a need for a Chinese-Filipino fast-food version of Jollibee and McDonalds. Fifteen years later in 2000, there were 155 outlets.

One of America's best performing bank, Commerce Bank founded in 1973, had a stock growth of 2,000 percent in 10 years by serving the needs of customers who preferred the old fashioned way of face to face interactions and settling banking transactions. Commerce Bank has more than 270 bank branches. The bank lures customers to its branches that operate seven days a week through excellent customer service, convenient locations, in-store (its branches are called stores) special events and activities, mascots, fun to operate penny change machines that kiddie and adult clients enjoy tinkering with, among others.

Strategic withdrawal

Sun Tzu wisely stated, "Concentrate your energy and hoard your strength." Where resources are spread too thinly, one is vulnerable to attack. The experienced marketer understands how it is best to concentrate resources in star brands, possibly developing question mark brands (those with weak market position in a high-growth industry) and cleverly pruning dog brands (those with weak market position in a low-growth industry).

Sun Tzu's "Art of War" in marketing illustrates how adverse political uncertainty must not take entrepreneurs and marketers by the collar for in every adversity lays great possibilities and huge opportunities.

(The writer teaches marketing management and brand management at the De La Salle Professional School's Graduate School of Business. Feedback at kdeasis@skyinet.net)

Deposit for future subscription: Issued shares or not?

By Emmanuel C. Alcantara and Fara G. Vargas
SGV & CO

TAX-FILES

IN THE PAST, there was an issue on whether the deposit for future subscription should be treated as an original issuance of shares subject to documentary stamp tax (DST) under Section 175 of the 1997 Tax Code, as amended.

Section 175 of the 1997 Tax Code, as amended, essentially provides that DST liability attaches on every original issue of shares of stock by any corporation.

Deposits for future stock subscription represent the undertaking of a depositor to subscribe to shares of stock of a company in the future. They are actually advances made to the capital of a corporation by a person, who may or may not be an existing stockholder, which will be used as payment for shares of stock in case the corporation subsequently issues shares of stock out of its authorized capital stock (ACS), or in case the ACS is fully issued, by way of an increase in ACS.

The Securities and Exchange Commission likens deposits for future subscriptions to conditional subscription, i.e., conditioned upon the performance of certain conditions or happening of certain events in the future, which usually takes the form of either the issuance of shares from the unissued capital stock or an increase in capital stock. Hence, a conditional subscription does not make the subscriber a stockholder or render him liable to pay the amount of subscription, until the performance or fulfillment of the condition stated therein. (SEC opinion dated Aug. 6, 1987)

The SEC stated that while deposits of this nature may be allowed for balance sheet presentation as part of the stockholders equity account, the same cannot be considered as part of the capital of the corporation until shares are actually issued in consideration thereof. (SEC opinion dated Aug. 11, 1997)

In the Supreme Court case of Central Textile Mills, Inc. vs National Wages and Productivity Board, etc., G.R. No. 104102, Aug. 7, 1996, the court defined deposits for future subscriptions as representing money which the corporation will hold in trust for the individual/entity who made the deposits until it files a petition to increase its capitalization and a certificate of filing of increase of capital stock is approved and issued by the SEC. As a trust fund, this money is still withdrawable by any of the subscribers at any time before the issuance of the corresponding shares of stock, unless there is a pre-subscription agreement to the contrary.

Taxation

Can we consider then deposits for future subscription, though not a share of stock by itself nor evidenced by certificate of shares of stock, as acceptance by the corporation of a stockholder's subscription which can be considered as an original issue of shares? If this is so, then the company will definitely be liable under Section 175 of the 1997 Tax Code, as amended.

As to what the term issue for DST purposes under Section 175 contemplates, Revenue Memorandum No. 47-97 provides for the proper interpretation of the term original issue as the point at which the stockholder acquires and may exercise attributes of ownership over the stocks. The stocks can be alienated, the dividends or fruits derived therefrom can be enjoyed, and they can be conveyed, pledged or encumbered.

Considering that the depositor of the future subscriptions is not a stockholder of a corporation by virtue of the deposits, it cannot exercise the attributes of ownership over these subscriptions in the sense of a stockholder as it cannot vote during stockholders election, nor can it derived dividends therefrom.

For the following reasons, it is quite clear that deposits for future subscriptions cannot be considered or treated as an original issue of shares subject to DST under Section 175 of the 1997 Tax Code, as amended.

(i) Section 175 of the 1997 Tax Code, as amended, clearly imposes DST on the issuance of share of stocks. However, deposits for future subscription do not constitute shares of stock because they are not considered part of the capital of the corporation until actual issuance of the shares.

(ii) Since they do not constitute shares of stock forming part of the capital of the corporation, such deposits can be withdrawn or revoked anytime by the subscriber if the conditions of the subscription are not fulfilled. In which case, if the corporation has utilized the deposits and the investing subscriber subsequently withdraws them, such deposits become a liability of the corporation to the subscriber and will be treated as advances or a loan. On the other hand, shares of stock form part of the capital of the corporation and may not be withdrawn by the stockholder unless the requirements under the Corporation Code are complied with pursuant to the trust fund doctrine that the capital of the corporation should answer for the liabilities of the corporation.

(iii) Even if the corporation has full ownership and disposition of the deposits, such deposits are not yet issued shares of stock forming part of the capital of the corporation. The subscription to the shares represented by the deposits may or may not materialize. Hence, even if the corporation has utilized the proceeds of the deposits and such deposits are subsequently withdrawn by the subscribers, the corporation will recognize a liability to the subscriber.

Court of Tax Appeals has also categorically ruled that deposit for future subscription is not an original issuance of shares subject to DST under Section 175 of the 1997 Tax Code, as amended. (First Southern Philippines Enterprises, Inc. vs. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, CTA Case No. 5988 dated Jan. 17, 2002)

Recently, the Bureau of Internal Revenue confirmed that a deposit for future subscription is not an original issuance of shares nor it is a sale or transfer of shares contemplated under Section 175 and Section 176 of the 1997 Tax Code, as amended, but it is a standard accounting term which refers to an amount of money transmitted by a stockholder to a corporation on deposit with the possibility of the same being later subscribed in the company's capital. (BIR Ruling No. 015-2003 dated Nov. 17, 2003.)

Now that this long controversial issue has finally been settled by the Court of Tax Appeals and the BIR itself, a company can rest assured that shareholder advances reserved for possible future subscription of shares of stock of the company would not be assessed by the BIR for the DST imposed by Section 175 of the 1997 Tax Code, as amended.

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MAKATI CONDO
55m² with 1BR / Kitchen/T&B
Tita 09194014983 /9511624

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

CONDO/TWNHSE

MANILA

ESPANA TOWER
nr UST 0917-8102903

NR LA SALLE TAFT
BnewTwnhse/3stry/3br/3tb/grge
P3.440M 8903461 loc 34

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1.8M BNew 1BR w/Pkng Cash
1,2&3BR Bnew Cash/Term
10%DP 2move in 0919-2189817

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10%DP only! 09165945185
Ready for Occupancy!!!

QUEZON CITY

CUBAO 1.5M No Int. 9132224

APARTMENT

LAGUNA

3Dr 2Sty Apt. LA120 FA 180
Metroville Sta. Rosa Laguna
Popoy 0917-5441746

LOT

LAS PINAS

TALON 204m²@P4,000
639-1694 / 0917-8102903

RIZAL

Alg Smulong Antpolo 3749m²
good4gas station 09178102903

OTHER PROVINCIAL

Cor 761m²Lot Next to Main Rd
w/ 1000m² Bldg Good 4 Clinic,
Restaurant, School,
Offices. 5mins to SM
P12M Fixed Gulang'
Lucena City 0919-6401704

LAGUNA

Commercial Lot for Sale
National Hi-way Cabuyao, Laguna 5 mins. away from Cabuyao exit. Call Now!71-0532 to 35

PROVINCIAL

★TAGAYTAY COLDEST ★
Along H-way low dp/mo. 240m²-up
nr Taal Vista-Totie 660-9372

RESORT

PRIVATE BEACH FRONT
HOME FURNISHED, P4.5M.
New U.S. design clear title 3br bungalow w/garage. U.S. appliances, 110 & 220, 4 aircons, 5 water heaters, dishwasher, microwave, grill, electric stove, washer & dryer. Quality tile, rugs, antiques, books, paintings, shipped from U.S., city water, two wells. Lge screen tv, cable, landscaped, walled, lge fenced land in rear, fruit trees, beach hut, peaceful, sunset blvd, Dapitan City, close to Dakak Resort, Supercat, Dipolog Airport. Owner transferred. Price firm. Direct Buyers Only. 0917-7489573 website http://home.ripway.com/2004-2/78433/

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

CONDO/TWNHSE

MANILA

OCEAN TOWER 3BR 3TB 140sqm
P45T/month 09175292250

KALOOCAN

NEW 1BR•2BR COM'L
CLINIC•OFFICE•P6.5Tup
#162 P. Jacinto cor. #39 Biglang Awa
Caloocan 323-0175

APARTMENT

MAKATI

2BR, 2TB, 12T SAV 8992148

Unfurn 3BR3TB Md P25,T8903104

PARANAQUE

7164216 8201453 PM SUCAT

PASAY

2BR 2Stry P7.5T 510-0915

QUEZON CITY

CUBAO P3.8 Std new 9124428

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

FOR LEASE

1. OFFICE SPACES
egaspi/Salcedo Vill., Makati
2. STORE SPACES/ WAREHOUSES
as Piñas / Cavite / Binondo/ andaluyong City
3. CHEMICAL TANKS
auan, Batangas
4. 3BR CONDO
ay Gardens
ALL RENTAL – NEGOTIABLE
Call Tel. No. 892-2681 to 96
ARIEL / DING / REXIE

WAREHOUSE/ FACTORY

Factory 4 Lease at United Paranaque Subd. 4 Km. 19 South Superhiway Paranaque City Contact No. 8238458 - Cely

ROOM & BOARD

Boni 4T Lady 0920-9258614

BEDSPACE

LADIES, 35 Sampaguita St, Michael Homes Meycauayan Bulacan 0916-3606123

BUSINESS RENTAL

AYALA AVE 8181696/7586

WANTED TO BUY

DEFECT TV/COMPO 7325865

RESORT LEASE/ RENT

Pansol Hot Spring priv 7767507

LOAN & MORTGAGE

2% W/O TAKING CAR 3677523/24

FINANCIER 0919-3353969

LOT FOR LEASE

LOT for lease 6462659 / 0920-9216673 Mars

OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT

MALATE MLA 526-8048/49

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

HONDA

CIVIC 97MDL 320T neg 09172087391

ISUZU

Trooper '02 4x4 3.0DD
1st Owner Casa Serviced
Call 0917-5272067

MITSUBISHI

L300 F85SMODEL 170T neg 09178122288

VOLVO

2002Volvo S60 T5 18K Km 1.6M
Neg. Ava/Lee 8481466

OTHER CAR BRANDS

95'HONDA ESI SPORTY TYPE 270 NEG. CALL JOEL 578-4677

Pajero Land Cruiser Surf Estima Lite-Hi Ace Delica etc Finance T-In 8328659

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CARS FOR RENT

1T/Hiace 9136710/4333682

ABC CARS / VANS
NEW MODELS W/ OR W/O DRIVER
MLA HO 536-8822 * 303-9789
Q.C. BR. 426-2278 * 426-4084
MARIKINA BR. 998-8210

MB HIACE URVAN 8276605

STAREX 7318549

Toyco Rent A Car-Cars Vans Coaster (02)800-6595

CAR LOAN

1.5% Fast Car Loan 3677523/24

1.5% 1HR CAR LOAN3743803

1.5% CAR LOAN 6567685

1.5% CARLOAN 373-6519

1.5% CARLOAN 533-8254

1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% Fast Car Loan 6560140

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CAR LOAN

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3650974/75

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3732081-82

•1HR Fast Car Loan 7125202•

2% w/o Taking Car 7262780

2% w/oTaking Car 8870490/95

2% w/oTaking Car 8966630/33

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

2% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

BUSN DRS OFW 524-3197

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

BUY/SELL

EDUCATION PLANS 780-0106

CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL

Brand New Circuit Braker 1200 Amphars GE ED&C T640-8448

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

YAMAHA GRAND & UPRIGHT
ELITE PIANO CENTER
Almost New:TERMS-7213124

BILLIARDS

2ST New Corrolt SR Imprld 7767507

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5633742 0917-8473744

BUYING ROLEX
Other WATCHES, BEST PRICE
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7220433 • 4123543

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late BERNARDINO V. ABARIENTOS and EUGENIA C. ABARIENTOS was extrajudicially settled among their heirs as per Doc No. 46 5 Page No. 94 Book No. II Series of 2004 as per Notary Public Atty. Manano U. Palisoc of Makati City (PDI-Feb. 20,27, Mar. 5, 2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Sps. Leonardo B. Reyes and Emprenciana G. Reyes was extrajudicially settled among their heirs per Doc. 6 Page 2 Book XVII Series of 2004 before notary public Pacifico A. Tunac of Quezon City (PDI-Feb. 20, 27 & Mar. 5, 2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late ANTONIO DEL ROSARIO MACARANAS has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc 212, Page 043, Book XII, Series of 2003 before Notary Public Atty. Avelino B. Macaraeg of Quezon City (PDI-Feb. 20, 27 & Mar. 5, 2004)

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is given that passport w/ VISA #MM242013 issued to CRISPULO B. BRITANIA was lost (PDI-March 5, 2004)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

GLOBAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY
that assists in air management in polluted cities worldwide.
Send email enquiries to :
GlobalAirBiz@yahoo.com.sg

I NEED MEDICINES HOSP SUPPLIES & EQUIPT ANY QNTY TXT /CALL09275828275 Krisbine

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

RETIRE 2YRS 09189051567

RTW Wholesaler 3738821

Singapore Bizmen Looking for Crazy Entreprenours who want to wear tailor made clothes & drive fancy sports cars. Will train. Call 0927-5680230

DIRECT SALE

SIDELINE JEWELRY CONSIGN ORIENTATION M-S@8-8 4531478

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

FEMALE

ADM ASST w/acctg bckgrnd apply 1007 Paris St Molate - PMMP ENTR

Rush Good Maid NBI 4307061

SALES PROMO GIRLS
White to Fair Complexion FOR Beauty Products 7248781 7272890

SECRETARY, F, Sing, less than 30 y o Grad of 4 yr course comp ld Tel 7231840

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

Direct Hire Ofc Mrktng Staff 18 /45yo coll level/grad w/w/o exp start asap 4390226 Mariel

•Direct Hire Ofc Mktg Staff M/F 18-50 High Compensation Start ASAP Clarissa 4390585•

DOCTOR MED TECH
RSV Clinic TSOC 924-9935

FREE CAREGIVER TRAINING PROGRAM W/CERTIFICATE
5899958 4043528 5212773

Job Hiring 09196122555 Forry

JOB HIRING 0920-4135660 Kim

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

JOB HIRING 0922-3295191 Ivy

Now Hiring for SM Stores •Expd. Salesmen/Saleslady 19 24yrs old 5'2(F) 5'5(M) Single with pleasing personality willing to undergo training & be assigned to provincial outlets •Expd. Flower arranger (Dried & Art flower) 22-28yrs old Jenet 7321942 / 7321872

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OFFICE MKTG. STAFF (18-4' COLL GRAD/LEVEL W/W/O EX' 438 9340 MS SHIELA

1. Executive Assistant:

a. Exceptional communication skills within all levels of client organizations.
b. Proven experience working with variety of clients.
c. Self-driven, strong attention to detail.
d. Can work with minimum supervision, and flexible most especially with time schedule.
e. Extensive experience in office procedure and administration.
f. Trustworthy, can handle confidential issues.

Qualified applicants are advised to send resumé by e-mail at ffe_intl@pacific.net.ph

2. Accounting Clerk:

a. Male or Female not more than 35 years of age.
b. Well-verse in the standard procedure of tax and general accounting such as but not limited to:
   a. Financial statements preparation/analysis
   b. Bank Reconciliation
   c. Taxes, VAT, SSS, HDMF and Philhealth remittances
   d. Highly analytical, hardworking, result oriented and can work with minimum supervision

Qualified applicants are advised to send resumé by e-mail at ffe_intl@pacific.net.ph

3. Stock Custodian/Driver:

a. Male not more than 40 years of age.
b. At least high school graduate.
c. Knowledge in stock inventory.
d. Ability to work extended hours with minimum supervision.
e. Driving experience of at least 5 years

Qualified applicants kindly apply at:

FFE INTERNATIONAL, INC.
GF Classica Towers
114 H.V. Dela Costa St.
Salcedo Village, Makati City 1227

March 8-9 – 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. only

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT
Bids & Awards Committee

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

PROCUREMENT SPECIALIST

The Early Childhood Development Project

The Government of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (WB-IBRD) toward the cost of the **Early Childhood Development Project (ECDP)**, and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to payment of professional services under this Contract.

The Project is being implemented in three regions (6, 7 and 12) by the respective City/Municipal Local Government Units with national support from the Department of Health and Dept. of Education. Coordination and management is handled through a National Project Management Office based in DSWD. The project now invites Individual Proponents for the hiring of a Procurement Specialist.

The Consultants will report directly to the Director Administrative Service and should meet the following qualifications:

- University degree such as: LLB, Business Administration, Engineering or Architecture, preferably a lawyer.
- At least five (5) years experience in procurement or contract administration.
- Knowledge of World Bank procurement rules and procedures is required.
- In-depth knowledge of applicable national regulations for the procurement of works, goods and services in the Philippines, particularly RA 9184, the Procurement Reform Law, including those prescribed by the Local Government Code.
- Computer literate.
- Proficient in oral and written communication.
- Must be able to render services on a full time basis.

Interested Applicants may submit their **Application Letters and Comprehensive Resumé** to the **Bids & Awards Committee Secretariat** at 2nd Floor, DSWD, Batasan Pambansa Complex, Constitution Hills, Quezon City with telephone numbers: 951-7116 until **March 12, 2004 at 5:00 p.m.**

(Sgd.) **RHODA F. YAP**
Assistant Secretary and Chairperson
Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI - March 5, 2004)

WANTED IMMEDIATELY

CUSTOMER SERVICE CLERK and HUMAN RESOURCE CLERK

Qualifications:
- Female (single)
- 21-25 years old
- Graduate of any Business course
- Graduating students may apply

Send to: U.P. P.O. Box 15, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY
- comprehensive resumé
- records of grades
- 2x2 or 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 ID picture

Our office is located at San Juan

DAVAO CITY WATER DISTRICT

J.P. Laurel Avenue, Davao City
Tel. No. 082-2219400 Tele Fax 082-2264885

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Davao City Water District (DCWD) hereby invites all interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid in accordance with the IRR of RA 9184, for the supply and delivery of the following Pumps and Motors:

Item Package	Description	Ceiling of Bid Price
1	125Hp VTP & Motor PW-2	1,398,000.00
2	100Hp VTP & Motor PW-3	1,363,000.00
3	125Hp VTP & Motor PW-4	1,438,000.00
4	125Hp VTP & Motor PW-6	1,172,000.00
5	100Hp VTP & Motor PW-14	999,000.00
6	125Hp VTP & Motor PW-19	1,096,000.00
7	100Hp VTP & Motor PW-20	1,012,000.00
8	75Hp VTP & Motor PW-29	862,000.00
9	125Hp VTP & Motor PW-30	1,149,000.00
10	150Hp VTP & Motor Tugbok 05	1,331,000.00
11	250Hp VTP & Motor Calinan 02	2,000,000.00
	TOTAL	P 13,820,000.00

Eligibility requirements per item package are available at the Purchasing Division Office starting March 05, 2004 during its business hours. Deadline for the submission of eligibility documents/requirements will be on or before March 26, 2004.

Bid documents may be released only to applicants with a Notice of Eligibility, upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P500.00 per package starting April 06, 2004.

Pre-bidding is set on May 03, 2004 at 3:00 pm and the Opening of Bids on May 14, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. at the DCWD Regional Training Center, Madapo Hills, Davao City.

DCWD reserves the right to reject any or all bids, or to waive any formality/informality of the bids and to accept only such bids which are advantageous to the District.

(Sgd.) ALFONSO E. LAID
AGM for Administration
Chairman, Bid & Canvass Committee

(PDI – March 5 & 12, 2004)

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES

Ang Bangkong May Damdaming-Bayan
1598 M. H. del Pilar St. cor. Dr. J. Quintos St., Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 522-00-00; 526-01-00 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites interested suppliers who are (a) duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietors; or (b) 60% Filipino-owned Partnership/Corporations; or (c) two or more suppliers forming into joint ventures jointly and severally liable; or (d) cooperatives duly registered with the CDA; with largest single contract, similar to the items for bid, for the last 2 years, at least equal to 50% of the approved budget; and with Net Financial Contracting Capacity (NFCC) at least equal to the approved budget, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following items:

ITB No.	Item/Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2004-026	30 units LAPTOP COMPUTERS (with carrying cases)	P 2,250,000.00	LBP Funds

Bidding of the above requirements is scheduled on March 24, 2004 at 1:00 p.m. and the Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Division of the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar St., Malate, Manila.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on March 12, 2004, 9:00 a.m. at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to the Qualification/Eligibility, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Only those bidders who comply with the Bank's requirements shall be eligible to participate in the bidding.

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any defect or informality and to accept bids as may be considered most advantageous to the Bank.

ANTONIO T. HERNANDEZ
SVP, Corporate Services & Subsidiaries Sector
Chairman, Committee on Bids and Awards

(PDI–February 28 & March 5, 2004)

Republika ng Pilipinas
PANGASIWAAN NG TUBIG AT ALKANTARILYA SA METRO MANILA

Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City 1105, Philippines
CORPORATE OFFICE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), in coordination with the National Power Corporation (NPC), will conduct a public bidding for the Drilling of Holes and Piezometer Installation in San Lorenzo, Norzagaray, Bulacan, denominated as Contract No. DHPI-1. The Approved Budget Cost for this project is P2,352,916.50, chargeable against the MWSS-NPC Common Fund.

The bidding is open to all interested Contractors/Suppliers who have previous experience in drilling and installation of similar monitoring instruments.

- ❑ **Scope of Work**
  - a. Drilling of Hole
  - b. Supply of Piezometer Data Recorder and Accessories
  - c. Installation of Piezometer
  - d. Submission of Factual Report
- ❑ **Implementation Period** - 90 calendar days

Interested parties may secure bid documents and the checklist of the pre-qualification/eligibility requirements from:

MWSS-BAC SECRETARIAT
Engineering & Project Management Dept.
Ground Floor, MWSS Complex
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City
Telefax: 922-2568 / 920-5413

A complete set of Pre-qualification/Eligibility Requirements and Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested eligible bidder upon payment of a non-refundable fee in cash or in check payable to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in the amount of P500.00 starting March 1, 2004. All bids shall be accompanied by a bid security in any of the following forms:

a. Cash, Manager's Check, Cashier's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit, or Bank Draft - minimum of one (1%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost.
b. Bank Guarantee - minimum of one and a half (1 1/2%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost (ABC).
c. Surety Bond - minimum of two and a half (2 1/2%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost.

The bidder's pre-qualification/eligibility documents, and the bid proposals (Technical and Financial) must be submitted at the same time in separate sealed envelopes, to above address on or before 2:00 p.m. of March 19, 2004. The envelope containing the eligibility documents will be opened on the above date of bid submission, while the envelope containing the bids (financial proposal) will be kept in a secured box and will not be opened until after the completion of the eligibility evaluation by the BAC, and the list of qualified bidders is finalized and approved by the BAC. Only the bids of the eligible bidders will be opened on the date of bid opening, which will be announced later, while the bid of ineligible bidders will be returned unopened.

The official timer for purposes of determining the official time shall be based on the bundy clock located at the Office of MWSS Engineering & Project Management Department.

Late bids will not be accepted.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be conducted at the above address of the BAC SECRETARIAT on **March 9, 2004** at 2:00 p.m.

(Sgd.) ORLANDO C. HONDRADE
Administrator

(PDI - Feb 27 & March 5, 2004)

POEA
24-HR HOTLINES
722-1144 • 722-1155

Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS
In Compliance with RA 7041

A. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUDICATION BUREAU (PIAB) C

GRAFT INVESTIGATION OFFICER I - Item Nos. OMBA-GI01-50-1998 and OMBA GI01-51-1998 (2 Positions); SG-26

Education: Bachelor of Laws; Experience: 3 years of experience in the practice of law, counselling, investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related work; Training: None required; Eligibility: RA 1080 (BAR)

B. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION (HRMD)

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OFFICER II - Item No. OMBA-HRMO2-1-1998; SG-15

Education: Bachelor's degree; Experience: One year of relevant experience; Training: Four hours of relevant training; Eligibility: Career Service Professional/Second Level Eligibility

Interested applicants should submit applications within ten (10) working days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division, at the above address the following: 1) an application letter stating the position/item applied for; 2) duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212); 3) 1" x 1" picture (colored); 4) BAR Rating/CSC Certificate of Eligibility; 5) Transcript of Records; 6) Certificate of Seminars/Trainings attended (CSC accredited); and 7) Certificate from previous/present employment stating the position, actual duties and responsibilities.

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION

Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE JUNK ITEMS

"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING : March 24 and 25, 2004, 2:00 PM
The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the following junk and unserviceable items:

SCHEDULE – I: March 24, 2004, 2:00 PM, Solarium Multi-Purpose Room, Bldg.-1, NPC-HO, Diliman, Quezon City

ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MIN. BID PRICE
1	One (1) lot scrap metals consisting of aluminum claddings, radiators corroded drums and GI sheets, pipes motors, post and suspension insulators steel beams, fire extinguishers steel plates copper wires, and other junk items located at the cordoned off area of the Waste Segregation Area, Plant B, Mak-Ban GPP Bo. Brin, Bay, Laguna.	P 1,645,000.00/lot
2.	One (1) lot of assorted cables consisting of co-axial, telephone, power and control cables located at Bataan TPP, Limay, Bataan.	P 1,040,550.00/lot
3.	One (1) lot scrap metals consisting of boiler re-heater tubes, air heater elements, steel racks, assorted pipes, control and co-axial cables, copper wires bare, and other scrap/junk items located at the cordoned off area of the Malaya TPP Tank Farm, Pila, Rizal.	P 1,424,000.00/lot
* 4.	One (1) lot expired AERO Foam, approximately 88 pails and 11 drums of waste/sludge oil located at Navotas Tank Farm, Navotas Fish Port, Navotas Metro Manila	P 7,436.00/lot

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

SCHEDULE – II : March 25, 2004, 2:00 PM, Solarium Multi-Purpose Room, Bldg.-1, NPC-HO, Diliman, Quezon City

ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MIN. BID PRICE
1.	One (1) lot scrap metals consisting of counter weights, stator coil, control corroded drums, GI sheets, pipes, motors, elevator parts, steel beams, insulators, used tires, angle bars, steel flat-forms, steel plates copper wires, control panels, circuit breaker mechanism boxes, valves, station batteries oil tanks, air condition equipment, marshalling boxes, and other junk items located at the cordoned off area of the Kalayaan CBK Office and Caliraya HEPP, Laguna.	P 1,302,400.00/lot
2.	One (1) lot of assorted pipes and junk items located at Bataan Thermal Power Plant (Bataan TPP), Limay, Bataan.	P 500,000.00/lot
3.	One (1) lot unserviceable power cables (9 reels) and (2 reels) wire ropes, located at the cordoned off area of the Kalayaan Warehouse, Laguna.	P 1,224,000.00/lot
* 4.	One (1) lot used transformer oil, "PCB Free," 150 drums, located at Caliraya HEPP, Caliraya, Laguna (drums not included)	P 277,500.00/lot
5.	One (1) lot scrap and junk items located at Lubang Diesel Power Plant Lubang Island, Occidental Mindoro	P 695,000.00/lot

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1 PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S/CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN (2002 ORIGINAL OR XEROX COPY OF THE BIDDER OR AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT (ORIGINAL) OF THE COMPANY.

All interested parties who wish to secure bid forms for the said bidding must present a valid Tax Identification Card or Income Tax Return

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/set from S.V. Lamuntad, Jr. at Bldg. 1, Ground Floor, NPC Head Office, Corner Agham Road and Quezon Ave., Diliman, Q.C. or call telephone no. 924-5384. Deadline for issuance of bid form is 4:30 PM March 23, 2004 for Sch-I, March 24, 2004 for Sch-II

For the Materials Management Department
(Sgd.) FELIX B. TACATA, JR.
OIC, MMD

(PDI – March 4, 5 & 6, 2004)

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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
THIRD ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PROJECT
Division Bids and Awards Committee
DIVISION OF ABRA

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

ABR-SBP-03-004

March 5, 2004

To All Qualified Bidders:

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has received a loan from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) towards the cost of financing the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments for civil works component of the project. Bidding is open to all contractors classified by and registered with the Inter-Agency Committee on Registration and Classification of Contractor from all eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines for Procurement under the JBIC Loans (Nov. 1987).

Bidders shall be at least Sub-category 'Small B'

Package 6:
07-015-0001
- Repair of one (1) unit-three (3) classrooms @ Malibcong CS, Malibcong, Abra
- Repair of one (1) unit-two (2) classrooms @ Malibcong CS, Malibcong, Abra
- Repair of one (1) unit-two (2) classrooms @ Tanpan PS, Malibcong, Abra

Package 7A:
07-026-0004
- Repair of two (2) units-one (1) classroom @ Alangitin ES, Tubo, Abra
- Repair of one (1) unit-two (2) classrooms @ Tubruba ES, Tubo, Abra

Package 7B:
07-026-0005
- Repair of one (1) unit-three (3) classrooms @ Supo ES, Tubo, Abra
- Repair of one (1) unit-three (3) classrooms @ Kili ES, Tubo, Abra

There shall be a Pre-bid conference on March 19, 2004/9:00 AM at the Conference room, Department of Education, Division Office of Abra, Actividad Economia Street, Bangued, Abra to answer queries and clarifications concerning the above-stated projects.

Bidding documents may be purchased at DepED Division Office of ABRA for a non-refundable fee of One Thousand Five Hundred Pesos Only (Php1,500.00) for each set. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the same address.

Bids shall be valid for a period of ninety (90) days after Bid opening and must be accompanied by a security in the amount of 2.5% of total bid price and shall be delivered to the Division's Bids and Awards Committee, Department of Education – Division Office of ABRA, Actividad Economia Street, Bangued, Abra on or before April 5, 2004/9:00 AM, at which time they will be opened in the presence of bidders who wish to attend.

(Sgd.) ROSITA C. BRILLANTES
Chairperson
Division Bids Awards Committee
Division of Abra

(PDI–March 5, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE

February 24, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) invites interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid of the following:

Name of Project	:	Portal Enhancement with Knowledge Base Integration, Security Upgrade and Lease of Hardware
Location of the Project	:	BIR National Office
Contract Duration	:	May 1 to December 31, 2004
Approved Budget	:	P24,666,666.67
Source of Funding	:	BIR's Appropriation

All interested parties may get the bidding documents from the BAC Secretariat, c/o Procurement Division at Room 605, 6th Floor, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City starting **February 28, 2004**, upon payment of non-refundable fee of **FIVE THOUSAND PESOS (P5,000.00)**.

A pre-Bid Conference will be held on **March 12, 2004** at **9:00 a.m.** at the **3rd Floor, Executive Conference Room, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City.**

Deadline for the submission and opening of eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals shall be on **March 24, 2004** at **1:30 p.m.** at **3rd Floor, Executive Conference Room, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City,** and followed by the opening of the bids.

The criteria to be used by the BIR in the following: (a) eligibility check of prospective bidders; (b) examination and evaluation of bids; and (c) postqualification, shall be on a non-discretionary "pass/fail" basis.

The BIR assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any excuse or loss that they may incur in the preparation of their bid. The BIR also reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any of the required formality therein and accept the bids most advantageous to the government.

For particulars, please inquire from the BAC Secretariat, thru the Chief, Procurement Division at Room 605, 6th Floor, BIR-NOB, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone nos. 926-5547/926-5538 and telefax no. 928-2026 (fax), or e-mail us at nelly.ibo@bir.gov.ph until **March 23, 2004.**

(Sgd.) MILAGROS V. REGALADO
Assistant Commissioner - Legal Service
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - March 5, 2004)

PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

A Subsidiary of Bases Conversion Development Authority

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE DETAILED ENGINEERING DESIGN FOR ROAD NETWORK AND UTILITIES OF THE PORO POINT COMMERCIAL COMPLEX

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC) invites interested Consulting Firms to submit Application for Eligibility, and subsequently to bid, if eligible, for the conduct of a detailed engineering design of the Road Network and Utilities of the Poro Point Commercial Complex, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union

Interested Consulting Firms should have completed contracts similar to the above services

The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of P3,000,000.00 shall come from PPMC corporate funds.

Eligibility Forms shall be made available to interested firms on the date and place mentioned below upon submission of Letter of Intent and payment of a non-refundable amount of one thousand Pesos (P1,000.00)

Schedule of Procurement Activities:

Activity	Dates	Time	Place
Submission of Letter of Intent and Issuance of Eligibility Form	March 12 & 15, 2004	During Office Hours	PPMC, Pennsylvania Ave., San Fernando City, La Union
Deadline for Submission of Eligibility Statement	March 22, 2004	12:00 noon	PPMC, Pennsylvania Ave., San Fernando City, La Union
Issuance of TOR and other Proposal Documents and Site Inspection	April 02, 2004	During Office Hours	PPMC, Pennsylvania, Ave., San Fernando City, La Union
Pre-Bid Conference	April 05, 2004	2:00 PM	Pre-Departure Area, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union
Submission and Opening of Bids	April 19, 2004	9:00 AM	Pre-Departure Area, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union

Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria subject to a shortlisting by PPMC. Thus, only eligible and subsequently shortlisted firms shall be invited to participate in the bidding. All Bids shall be evaluated under the quality-cost based evaluation/selection procedure as provided under RA 9184 and its IRR.

PPMC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive defect or required formality therein, and award the contract to any bidder whose proposal as determined by the BAC, is the most advantageous to the Corporation.

Should you need any further information or clarification regarding the Project, you may contact Engr. Jose B. Kalganilla at Telephone No. (072) 888-5954

(Sgd.) VIRGILIO M. SALAYOG
Vice Chairman, BAC

(PDI – Feb. 27 and March 05, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Capiz
MUNICIPALITY OF DUMALAG

-BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE-

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The MUNICIPALITY OF DUMALAG, CAPIZ invites interested bidders to pre-qualify and to cast sealed bids for the delivery of various construction materials for the construction of San Agustin-San Martin Farm to Market Road details of which is posted at the Bulletin Board in the municipality reserved for the purpose with approved budget of Php 2,217,087.50.

Interested parties may secure bid documents and Eligibility Requirements from the BAC SECRETARIAT, Office of the Municipality Planning and Development Coordinator, Dumalag, Capiz upon payment of non-refundable fee of Php 1,000.00.

The particulars of the bidding are as follows: viz:

Issuance of Bid Documents	March 16-17, 2004
Pre-Bid Conference	March 18, 2004
Opening/Submission of Bids	10:00 A.M. April 02, 2004

Bidders shall submit on the date of Opening/Submission of Bids two (2) sealed envelopes containing (1) Checklist of Eligibility Requirements, Bid security; its forms, amount and validity period, certification of the supplier/s that he/they has/have not been blacklisted, etc. and (2) Financial Proposal.

The BAC concerned reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason whatsoever, to waive any defects therein and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most responsive.

(Sgd.) ROBERTO F. FRESAS
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – March 5 & 12, 2004)

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The Family

of

SALVADOR H. LAUREL

Former Vice President
Republic of the Philippines

Thank the Lord for taking
Doy by the hand, gently
leading him to his eternal home
happy and serene.

We ask the Lord to bless those
who gave him the highest honors
and recognition for his unfailing
service to his beloved country;

We thank, with all our hearts,
all of you who have lifted our spirits
and filled the painful void with the
outpouring of your sympathy,
love and prayers.

"My soul, be at rest in God alone from whom comes my hope." Psalm 62:6

ALFREDO MATTI

Peacefully joined our Lord
on February 29, 2004 at the age of 85.

His loving family, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, March 6, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. at Eternal Gardens Memorial Park in Baesa, Quezon City.

"Eternal rest, grant unto him O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace."
John 11:25

ATTY. FRANKLIN Q. SUSA

Peacefully joined his Creator on 1st of March, 2004 at the age of 57.

His bereaved wife **Delia**; children **Mary Jane** and **Jose**, **Lucia Ester** and **Dennis**, **Franklin** and **France**, and **Frederico**; grandchildren **Jose Miguel**, **Janina Moira**, **Janelle Marie**, **Danielle** and **Andrea**, and other relatives request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, Inc., Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, 6th of March, 2004 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at La Funeraria Paz, Inc.

Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life: He that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live.
John 11:25

JOSE C. MEDINA, JR.

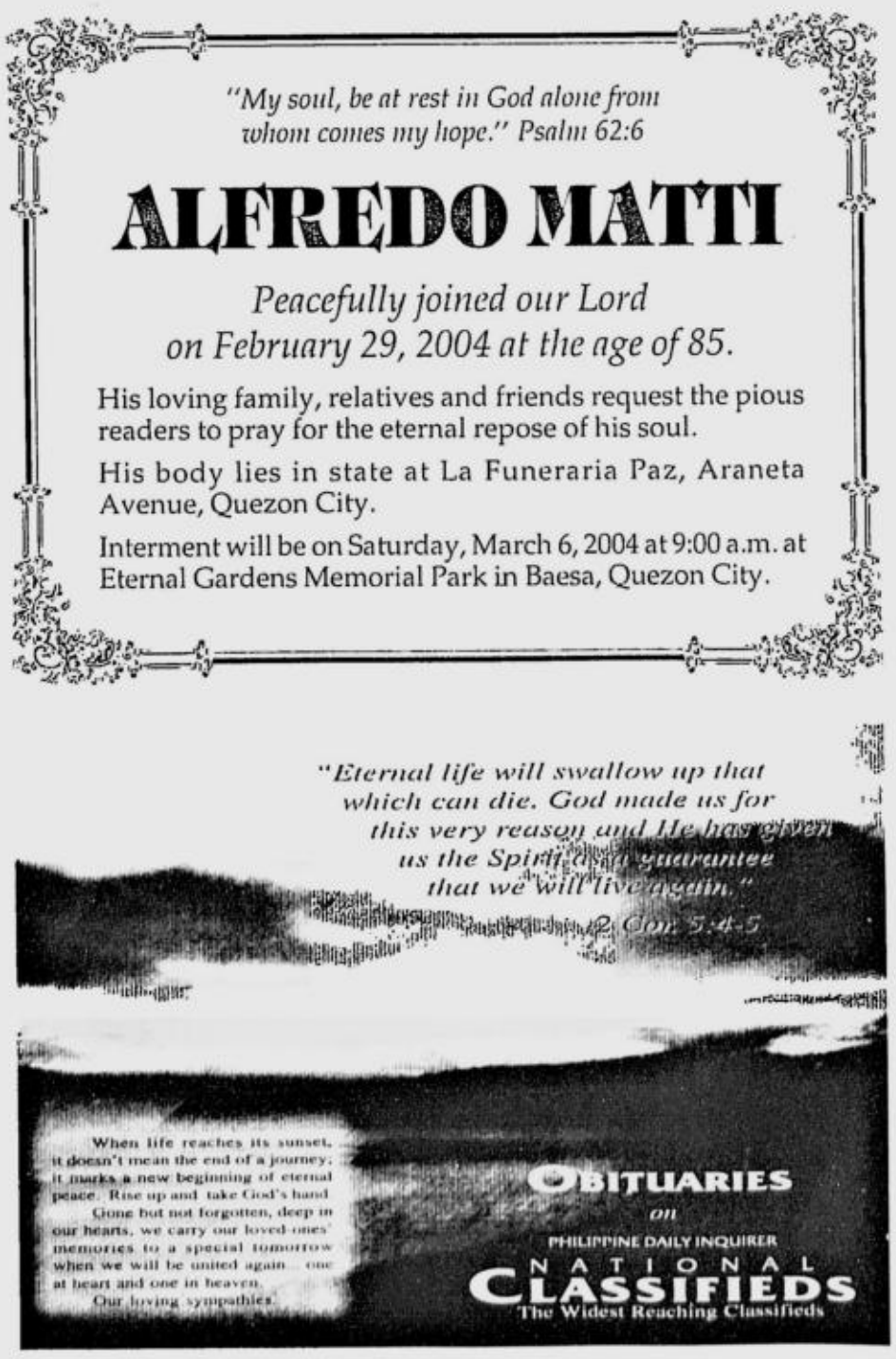
Former Undersecretary, Department of Agrarian Reform
Former Chairman, Cooperative Development Authority of Nueva Ecija
Project Director, Integrated Development Program of Nueva Ecija

Peacefully joined our Creator on March 4, 2004 at the age of 72.

His bereaved wife **Dr. Aida L. Medina**; son **Jomel**, and daughter-in-law **Cristy**; grandchildren **Jem,Jem**, **Joey Boy** and **Eric** remember him with love.

His remains lie in state at 31 Chestnut St., West Fairview, Quezon City and will be transferred on Monday, March 8, 2004 to the Department of Agrarian Reform, Quezon City.

He will be buried on Tuesday, March 9, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. at the Himlayang Pilipino, Quezon City.


"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again."
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When life reaches its sunset, it doesn't mean the end of a journey; it marks a new beginning of eternal peace. Rise up and take God's hand.
Gone but not forgotten, deep in our hearts, we carry our loved ones' memories to a special tomorrow when we will be united again... one at heart and one in heaven.
Our loving sympathies.
OBITUARIES
on
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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CLASSIFIEDS
The Widest Reaching Classifieds

FELICULA DENOMAN LAZARO

of Malabon City

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 2, 2004 at the age of 95

Her bereaved children **NORMA**, **MERLE**, **POMPOSA** and **LORENZO** and all her grandchildren request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at #384 General Luna Street, Malabon City

CLEMENTE R. SIOSON, JR.

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 2, 2004 at the age of 65.

His bereaved wife, children, grandchildren and siblings request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Chapel C-15, La Funeraria Paz, Inc., Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, March 7, 2004 at San Bartolome Parish Cemetery, Malabon.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord." Matthew 10:39

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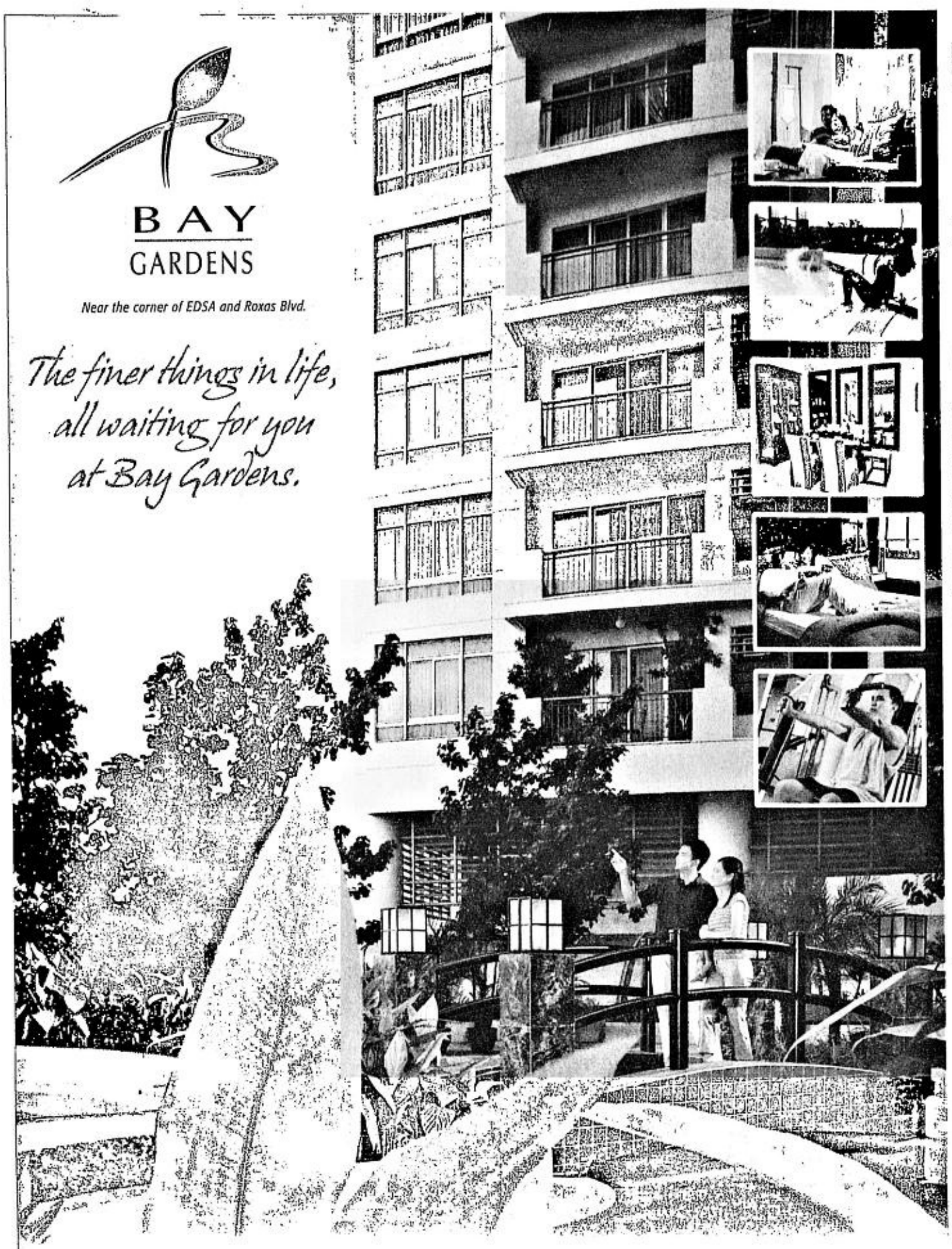

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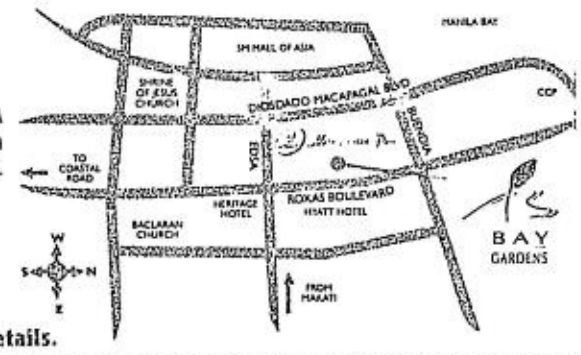

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US economy expanded–Fed

WASHINGTON—Factories hummed and consumers kept cash registers busy in the first two months of this year, fresh evidence the economic recovery is moving ahead, according to a Federal Reserve report Wednesday.

"Economic activity continued to expand in January and February," the Fed said in its latest survey of business conditions around the country. On the jobs front, however, the report found employment "growing slowly" in most central bank districts.

A separate survey of chief executives of the nation's biggest companies suggested hiring could start to pick up.

One-third of the executives said they expected to increase hiring in the next six months, while 22 expected to cut payrolls and 45 percent expected no change, according to a Business Roundtable survey.

The association said that is the first time since the fall of 2002 that a larger share of executives planned to add to payrolls rather than cut them.

"America's CEOs believe that the US economy is on course for continued steady improvement over the next six months," said Hank McKinnell, chair of the Business Roundtable and Pfizer Inc.'s chair and chief executive.

In the Fed report, factory activity rose in 11 of the 12 regional Fed districts, good news for America's manufacturers, who were hardest hit by the 2001 recession and have struggled mightily to get back on firm footing.

Even with the pickup in factory activity, manufacturers have lost 3 million jobs since July 2000. That's the month factory employment peaked as the economy was enjoying a record-long expansion.

The lackluster jobs climate is a sore spot for President George W. Bush, and the Democrats are trying to use it as an election-year issue. AP

Japan firms' optimism cools in Q1, survey says

TOKYO—Japanese firms are feeling less optimistic about business conditions in the first three months of the year, a survey showed on Thursday, suggesting that a higher yen and softer share prices last month dented confidence.

Still, carrying over momentum from the economy's strongest growth in 13 years in the final quarter of last year, the survey by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) showed the outlook for April-June improving again and a separate survey reaffirmed that corporate earnings and capital spending are on a strong recovery track.

The MOF's business sentiment index (BSI) for January-March eased to plus 5.1, compared with a revised plus 5.3 in October-December, though it was a positive reading for a second straight quarter after 10 quarters of negative figures.

The index subtracts the percentage of firms expecting the business environment to worsen from the percentage that expect it to improve.

"The modest decline is probably due to concerns about the yen's strength and the stock market's consolidation at the time of the survey in February," said Mamoru Yamazaki, chief economist at Barclays Capital (Japan).

The yen scaled 3-½ year highs around 105.10 to the dollar in late February, up 20 percent over two years, before pulling back five percent to around 110.50 yen on Wednesday to take some pressure off Japanese exporters.

The stock market's benchmark Nikkei average, after see-sawing in the 10,000-11,000 range in February has this week punched through key psychological barriers to probe 21-month highs near 11,500.

Economists said that on the whole the figures showed that the momentum from Japan's fastest growth in 13 years in the last quarter of 2003 has continued into the new year, propelled by strong demand from export markets such as China and booming sales of digital electronics products.

An MOF official said the survey also suggested that Japan's economic recovery, initially confined to large exporters, was spreading to smaller firms. *Reuters*

Pedal to the metal excitement.

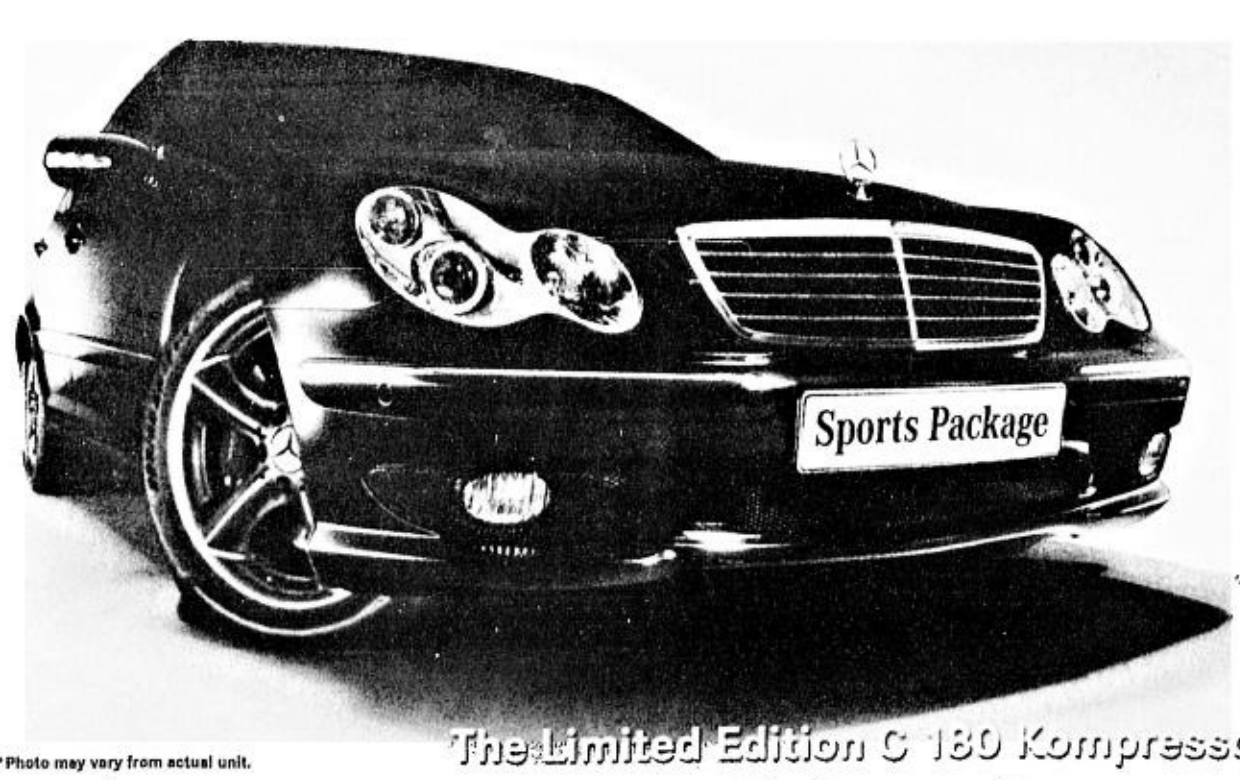
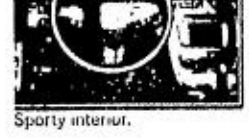


*Photo may vary from actual unit.

The Limited Edition C 180 Kompressor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Eisner removed as Disney chair

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania—The Walt Disney Company late Wednesday removed Michael Eisner as chairman but kept him as chief executive, dividing the two top jobs at the media giant after a stunning shareholder rebuke.

The board also unanimously elected former US senator George Mitchell as chairman.

The moves came after a stormy annual meeting at which 43 percent of shareholders withheld their votes from Eisner, who has been blamed by some for the lackluster performance of the media-entertainment powerhouse in recent years.

"While making this change in governance, the board remains unanimous in its support of the company's management team and of Michael Eisner, who will continue to serve as chief executive officer," the board said in a statement late Wednesday.

The board statement said members were "aware that some voted for an immediate change in management and in the board," but added, "We believe the action we have taken today is in the best long-term interest of the shareholders of the company."

Eisner first became chief executive at the California-based media-entertainment powerhouse in 1984 and added the title of chairman in 1994.

But Eisner has had his share of setbacks in recent months. He has had to fight off a hostile takeover bid by Comcast and defend himself against criticism after Pixar Animation Studios abruptly terminated negotiations to extend its contract with Disney.

Eisner's most acute problem recently had been the unexpectedly strong grassroots campaign for his ouster spearheaded by Roy Disney, nephew of the legendary Walt Disney and Stanley Gold. *AFP*

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino

Susan campaigns alone for FPJ

Actress careful not to upstage Loren

By Marinel R. Cruz

SHE does not want to upstage vice presidential candidate Loren Legarda. That is why actress Susan Roces campaigns alone for her husband, Fernando Poe Jr., presidential candidate of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

The only time Susan will join Poe is during the *miting de avance* in May, according to an aide of the actor.

The aide is also in charge of Poe's and Legarda's nationwide campaign.

ACTRESS Susan Roces (right) will only join FPJ (center) and vice presidential candidate Loren Legarda (left) during the "miting de avance" in May. EPA/DENNIS SABANGAN

Palengke tours

Susan on Thursday had a palengke tour in Carriedo and Quiapo, Manila. She was accompanied by the wives of the senatorial candidates of the KNP.

Last Wednesday, the actress visited Binondo and the Sta. Cruz area in Manila from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. and was accompanied by former movie producers Marichu Vera-Perez and Armida Siguion-Reyna.

Three times a week

Vera-Perez was representing her former husband, senatorial candidate Ernesto Maceda. Siguion-Reyna was standing in for her brother, Juan Ponce Enrile, also a senatorial candidate.

Susan and the wives will be out on the streets three times a week as the campaign season heats up, according to a source who handles the nationwide political rallies of Poe and Legarda.

Back seat

The actress has kept to her role of dutiful wife to Poe, taking the back seat in the on-going presidential campaign.

After Poe had admitted for the first time last February to GMA 7's

SUSAN/ C4

Unique theme for Japanese filmfest

THIS year's Eiga Sai Japanese film festival has a unique theme: outstanding movies about samurais. This thematic focus is particularly choice because the ethos of the samurai warrior is distinctively Japanese, and says a lot about Japan's culture and world view.

The samurais were members of the military class. Samurais employed a range of weapons, but their most famous symbol was the sword.

Samurai were supposed to lead their lives according to the ethical code of Bushido ("the way of the warrior"). Strongly Confucian in nature, Bushido stressed loyalty to one's master, self-discipline, and respectful, responsible behavior.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

After a defeat, some samurai chose to commit ritual suicide (Seppuku), rather than being captured or dying a dishonorable death. In the last 19th century, however, Japan's feudal era came to an end, and the samurai class was abolished.

Still, samurai tenets continue to infuse Japanese attitudes and behavior to this day, so the ongoing festival's theme reverberates dynamically through the genre movies that are being screened, now at UP, and starting on March 9, at the CCP's Dream Theater.

The festival films are: "When the Rain Lifts" by **Takashi Koizumi**. The last screenplay written by Japan's legendary **Akira Kurosawa**. It is about a group of travelers stuck in a riverside inn during a torrential rainstorm that has closed the river crossing.

One of the travelers is a Ronin of great ability who catches the eye of a local lord, and goes to test for the position of sword instructor to the clan.

"Sanjuro" by Akira Kurosawa. A sequel to "Yojimbo," this film stars **Toshiro Mifune** as an uncouth wanderer. He meets some young samurai who want to weed corruption out of their city.

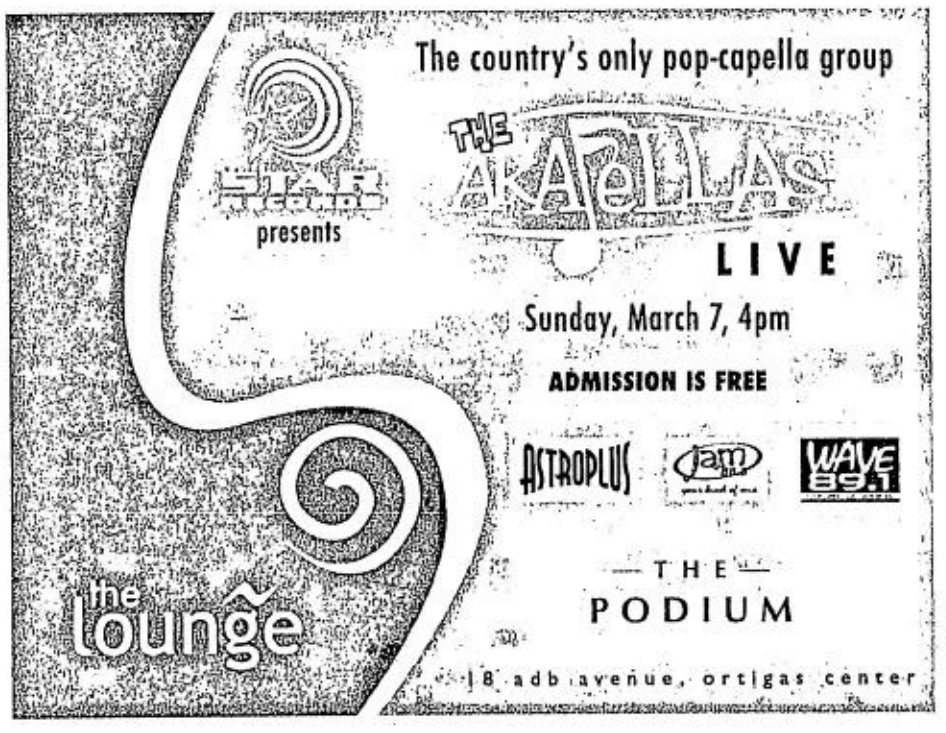
But Sanjuro comes up with wry insights, pointing out that the real corruption may be hidden. When assassins try to kill the young samurai, Sanjuro defends them, and helps them defeat the corrupt local officials.

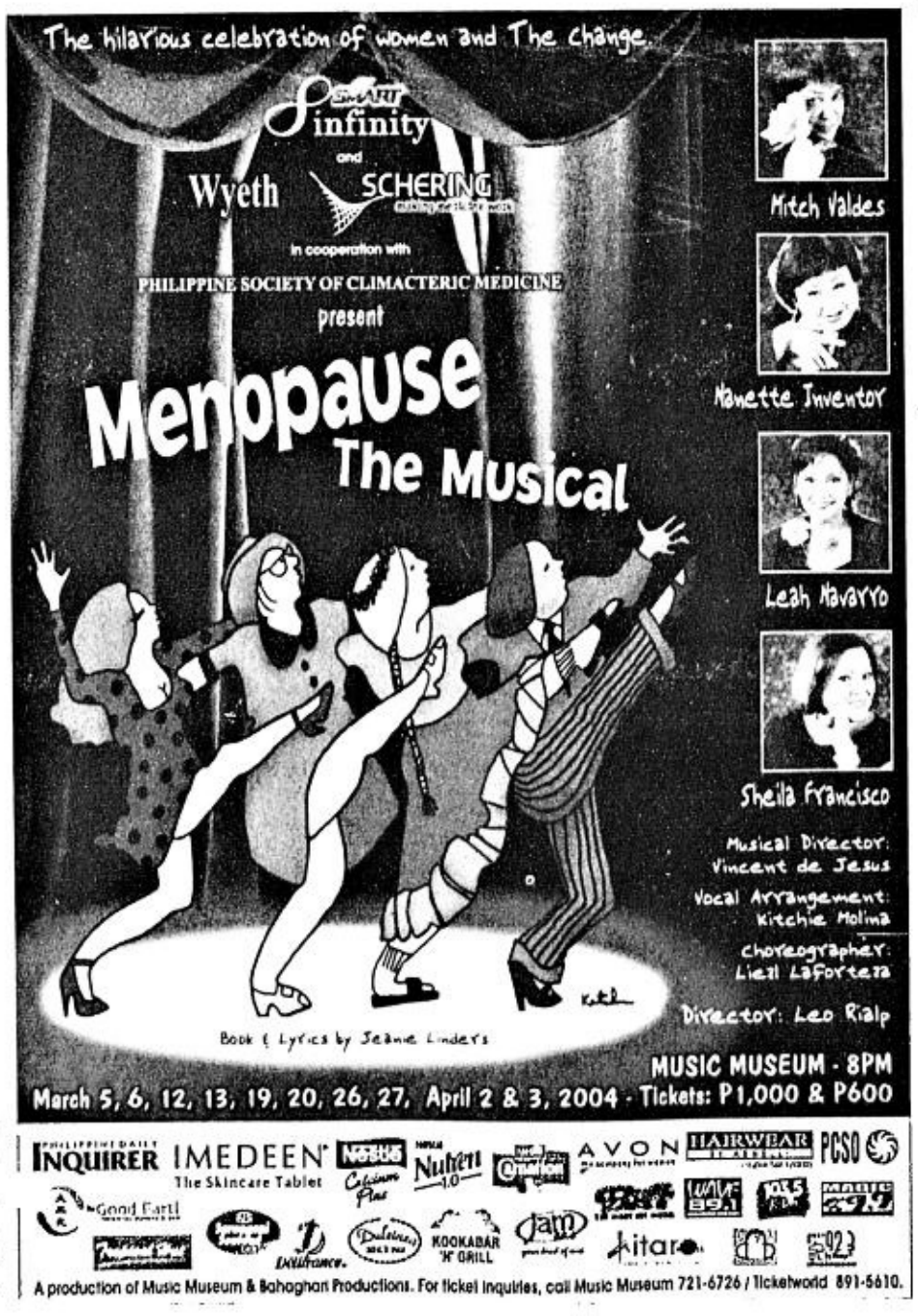
"Samurai Banners" by **Hiroshi Inagaki**. In Feudal Japan (1543-1562), a samurai who dreams of a unified, peaceful country enters the services of a lord, whom he convinces to kill a rival lord and take his widow as his concubine. He also persuades the widow to accept the arrangement, and to bear her husband's killer a son.

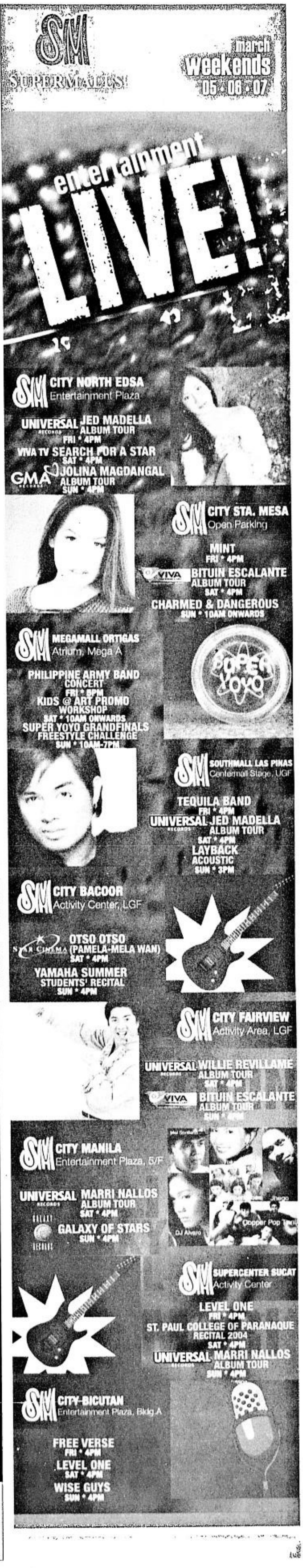
The samurai spends years using treachery, poetic sensibility, and military and political strategy to advance his lord's realm. Has he overreached? Are his dreams, blinded by love, too big?

"The Life and Opinion of Master Ichi" by **Kenji Misumi**. Zatoichi (**Shintaro Katsu**) tries to live a quiet life as a tradesman. But the

UNIQUE/ C3

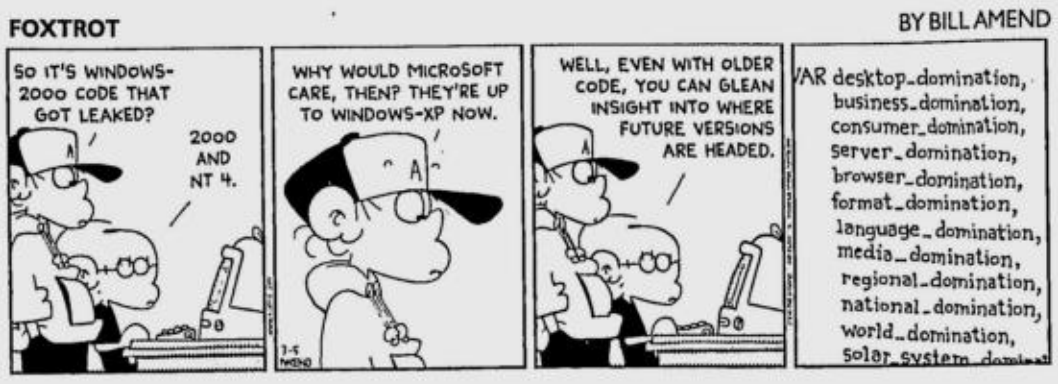



The hilarious celebration of women and The Change.
SmART infinity
and
Wyeth
SCHERING
in cooperation with
PHILIPPINE SOCIETY OF CLIMACTERIC MEDICINE
present
Menopause
The Musical
Book & Lyrics by Jeanne Linders
Mitch Valdes
Nanette Inventor
Leah Navarro
Sheila Francisco
Musical Director: Vincent de Jesus
Vocal Arrangement: Kitchie Molina
Choreographer: Liezl Laforteza
Director: Leo Rialp
MUSIC MUSEUM - 8PM
March 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27, April 2 & 3, 2004 - Tickets: P1,000 & P600
INQUIRER IMEDEEN The Skincare Tablet AVON HAIRWEAR PCSO
KOOKABAR 'N' GRILL
A production of Music Museum & Bahaghari Productions. For ticket inquiries, call Music Museum 721-6726 / Ticketworld 891-5610.


SM SUPERMALLS!
March Weekends 05 · 06 · 07
entertainment LIVE!
SM CITY NORTH EDSA Entertainment Plaza
UNIVERSAL RECORDS JED MADELLA ALBUM TOUR FRI * 4PM
VIVA TV SEARCH FOR A STAR SAT * 4PM
GMA RECORDS JOLINA MAGDANGAL ALBUM TOUR SUN * 4PM
SM CITY STA. MESA Open Parking
MINT FRI * 4PM
VIVA BITUIN ESCALANTE ALBUM TOUR SAT * 4PM
CHARMED & DANGEROUS SUN * 10AM ONWARDS
SM MEGAMALL ORTIGAS Atrium, Mega A
PHILIPPINE ARMY BAND CONCERT FRI * 8PM
KIDS @ ART PROMO WORKSHOP SAT * 10AM ONWARDS
SUPER YOYO GRANDFINALS FREESTYLE CHALLENGE SUN * 10AM-7PM
SUPER YOYO
SM SOUTHMALL LAS PIÑAS Centermall Stage, UGF
TEQUILA BAND FRI * 4PM
UNIVERSAL RECORDS JED MADELLA ALBUM TOUR SAT * 4PM
LAYBACK ACOUSTIC SUN * 3PM
SM CITY BACOOR Activity Center, LGF
STAR CINEMA OTSO OTSO (PAMELA-MELA WAN) SAT * 4PM
YAMAHA SUMMER STUDENTS' RECITAL SUN * 4PM
SM CITY FAIRVIEW Activity Area, LGF
UNIVERSAL RECORDS WILLIE REVILLAME ALBUM TOUR SAT * 4PM
VIVA BITUIN ESCALANTE ALBUM TOUR SUN * 4PM
SM CITY MANILA Entertainment Plaza, 5/F
UNIVERSAL RECORDS MARRI NALLOS ALBUM TOUR SAT * 4PM
GALAXY OF STARS SUN * 4PM
DJ Alvaro
Dapper Pop Trio
SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT Activity Center
LEVEL ONE FRI * 4PM
ST. PAUL COLLEGE OF PARANAQUE RECITAL 2004 SAT * 4PM
UNIVERSAL RECORDS MARRI NALLOS ALBUM TOUR SUN * 4PM
SM CITY BICUTAN Entertainment Plaza, Bldg.A
FREE VERSE FRI * 4PM
LEVEL ONE SAT * 4PM
WISE GUYS SUN * 4PM

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


SO IT'S WINDOWS-2000 CODE THAT GOT LEAKED?
2000 AND NT 4.
WHY WOULD MICROSOFT CARE, THEN? THEY'RE UP TO WINDOWS-XP NOW.
WELL, EVEN WITH OLDER CODE, YOU CAN GLEAN INSIGHT INTO WHERE FUTURE VERSIONS ARE HEADED.
VAR desktop_domination, business_domination, consumer_domination, server_domination, browser_domination, format_domination, language_domination, media_domination, regional_domination, national_domination, world_domination, solar_system_domi

A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA

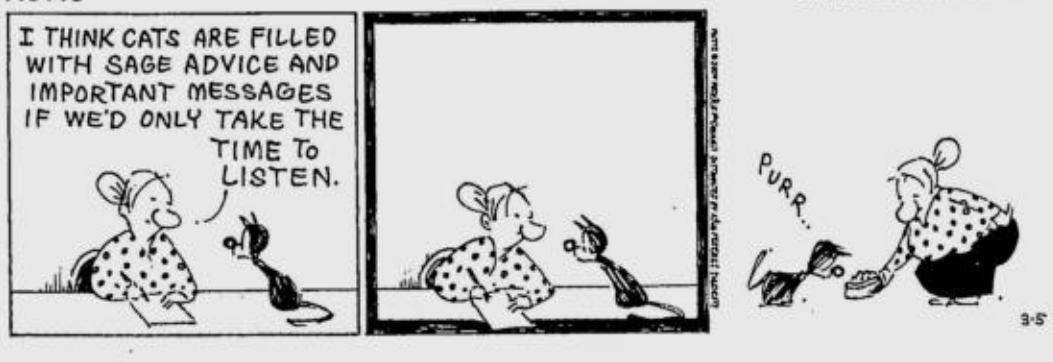
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S A DOORWAY JUMPER FOR WREN.
WHEN SHE SITS IN THE LITTLE SEAT, THESE ELASTIC BANDS LET HER BOUNCE ALL OVER THE PLACE.
WHOOOOOOOAH...
FOR AGES THREE MONTHS TO WALKING.
I CAN WALK!!

MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL



ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

BEHOLD! MY SCREENPLAY "NOTHINGNESS" IS FINALLY FINISHED! THIS IS THE MOMENT WE'VE BEING WAITING FOR. A MOVIE OF EPIC PROPORTIONS!
REMEMBER, IT'S GOING TO BE AN 8-PART MINISERIES WITH THE WORD "NOTHINGNESS" SIMPLY BLINKING AGAINST A WHITE BACKGROUND.
AS MY LEAD CHARACTER, LETTER "N", YOU MUST POSSESS UNCANNY ABILITY TO BLINK. DD, YOU'RE NOT LISTENING.
CAN I JUST BE AN "O"?

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON

WHAT?! THIS CREDIT CARD BILL IS HUGE!
I MEAN, I REMEMBER USING IT A FEW TIMES LAST MONTH, BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS!
WE SEEMED TO USE IT A LOT LAST MONTH CAUSE WE KEPT RUNNING OUT OF CASH
ANY IDEA WHY WE KEPT RUNNING OUT OF CASH?
I DUNNO.. BAD BUDGETING ON YOUR PART, MAYBE...

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are bright, clear, polished and articulate. Your public persona is charming and sophisticated. However, privately, you are sensitive and emotional. You thrive best in work that allows you to be expressive. You have a deep understanding of human nature and what makes others tick. The year ahead holds changes as significant as those in 1995.
Birthdate of: Samantha Eggar, actress; Dean Stockwell, actor; Penn Jillette, illusionist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a great day to reorganize things at work or at home. It's also a wonderful time to think about how you can improve your health. You want to live better!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Great day to party! Make an effort to join others in fun activities. Enjoy a lunch with co-workers (where truth is stranger than fiction). Accept invitations this evening.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You might want to take something special home for a family member. Even the tiniest gift shows that you care. It's truly the thought that counts.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a busy day. Plan on shopping, buying and selling, wheeling and dealing, negotiating and chatting with lots of people. You're in the mood to communicate.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You might buy something quite lovely for yourself or your home today. (Possibly for someone else.) If you do, it will be luxurious and will please you very much.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): With the Moon in your sign today, you feel confident, invigorated and more emotional than usual. Don't be afraid to share your feelings with others.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Try to find some time for private contemplation today. Sometimes being with others exhausts you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Enjoy good times with friends, especially female friends today. You have a strong need to confide in someone right now. You need to talk about problems you might be having with a partner or another friend.

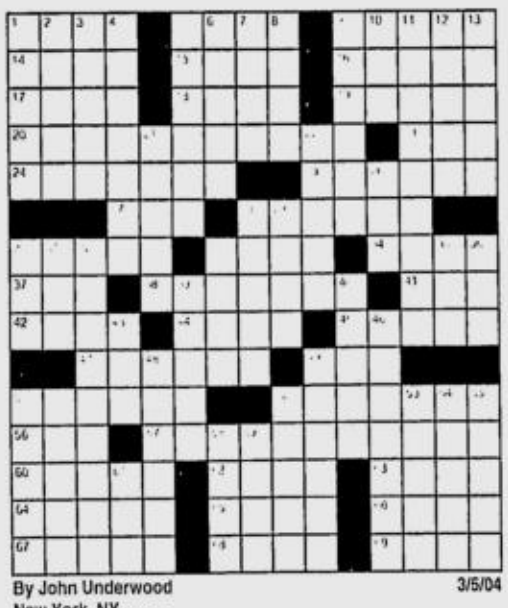
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Look sharp! People notice you today. Something you do will definitely attract attention your way. Let's hope it isn't a public argument or something negative.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Vary your routine today. Drive to or from work using a different route. Visit different stores and shops. If you can get out of town, by all means do so!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Because you are spending more money than usual, this is a good time to stay on top of your debt scene. It's important to know what you have and what you don't have.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Be extra-patient with others today. Tension before tomorrow's Full Moon could encourage conflict with someone. (Anger serves no purpose other than to make everyone miserable.)

DAILY CROSSWORD



By John Underwood
New York, NY
3/5/04

ACROSS
1 Manipulator
5 Faint
9 Vail rival
14 Stable female
15 Discharge
16 Cubic meter
17 Crow
18 Soft-drink nut
19 __ lazuli
20 French stew
23 %
24 Not you
25 Virgil's hero
27 Seventh tones
28 Dazed state
30 Citified
33 Prison rec area
34 Junk e-mail
37 Coati's coat
38 Hungarian stew
41 Kimono sash
42 Burden
44 Haulage cart
45 Grade-B Western
47 Satellite of Neptune
49 Helium or argon
50 Set upon violently
52 Disentangle
56 Innovative
57 Spanish stew
60 Flash
62 List element
63 Les Etats- _
64 Run the show
65 Coastal bird
66 __ not and say we did
67 Did some yard work
68 June honorees
69 Exxon, once

DOWN
1 Planetary shadow
2 Thermoplastic resin
3 Greek Muse
4 Boat race
5 Tea types
6 Secret love affair
7 Caron film
8 List-ending abbr.
9 Out for the night
10 B&O stop
11 West Indian stew
12 "Fear of Fifty" author Jong
13 Tree houses?
21 Some or any finish?
22 Glorifies
26 Figs.
28 Three-bean or Waldorf
29 TV-dinner holder
30 Flying saucer, briefly
31 Bleed
32 Virginia rabbit stew
33 Cosmonaut Gagarin
35 Writer Burrows
36 Russian space station
39 "Island of the Blue Dolphins" author
40 Stockpile
43 Yellow or Red
46 Most of the time
48 Rampaged
49 Dwarflike creatures
50 Wrath
51 Diamond of "Night Court"
52 Turn topsy-turvy
53 Wall climbers
54 Redacts
55 Will Rogers prop
58 Fibbed
59 Gillette blade
61 Born in France

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

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3/5/04

MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

ANO KAYANG BERTDEY GIFT KO KAY ITAY?
KUNG MAHILIG SIYA SA GARDENING, O DI HALAMAN..
..KUNG MAHILIG SIYANG MAG-BASA, O DI LIBRO.
ANG HIRAP PALA..
BAKIT?
E SAN AKO BIBILI NG BAGONG REMOTE?
J.Tejido 1-04
www.mikrokosmos.tk

KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA

HALOS LAHAT NAG GE-GAMES...
PISIW! PISIW!
O KAYA NAG CHA-CHAT...
O'DI KAYA'Y NAGFE-FRIENDSTER...
O KUNG ANU-ANO PA...
BOS BAWAL HO YAN...
... P-PERO KAMING KELANGAN MAG-TYPE NG REPORT E HINDI MAN LANG MAKAGAMIT NG COMPUTER?!? IMPORTANTE HO TO ATE! DEADLINE NA NITO MAMAYAAAAA...
E'ALA PA NGA HO TALAGANG BAKANTE... UPO MUNA KAYO...

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

NAHIHILO, NAHIHILO... SABAY, SABAY.. SABAY, SABAY... PABILIS NG PABILIS...
NAKAKAHALATA, NAKAKAHALATA,.. GINAGAWA, GINAGAWA... TAYONG TANGA, TAYONG TANGA...
PATANGA NG PATANGA.. PAINGAY NG PAINGAY.. MGA TANGANG MAIINGAY..

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

Kidlat Tahimik's name change case elevated to CA

By Delmar Carino
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Filmmaker Eric de Guia will have to wait longer before he can be officially be called Kidlat Tahimik.

He cannot yet legally enter "Kidlat Tahimik" as his name in his birth certificate as the government, through the Office of the Solicitor General, has recently decided to bring his case to the Court of Appeals.

The regional trial court branch 9 (family court) here is preparing De Guia's case record, docketed as Special Proceedings Case No. 98-C-0772, for transmittal to the CA following the OSG'a filing of a notice of appeal.

Contrary to law

The OSG, through Assistant Solicitor Josephine de Sagon Mejia, said the RTC's decision allowing De Guia to be renamed Kidlat Tahimik is "contrary to law and evidence."

The appeal notice came after family court Judge Francis Buliyat denied the OSG's motion to reconsider Buliyat's Nov. 28, 2002 ruling upholding De Guia's petition for change of name.

Notified of the OSG's move to elevate the case to the CA, Reynaldo Cortes, De Guia's lawyer, said he continues to believe in the cause of his client.

"Consider this as a test case but we are ready to exhaust the law and evidence to uphold the family court's decision," Cortes told the INQUIRER.

In his petition filed on July 21, 1988, De Guia asked the court to erase his recorded name for being a product of the country's colonial history.

De Guia, born here on Oct. 3, 1942, said using his name would continue to reflect the nation's culture that has been greatly influenced by western imperialist interests.

He said Kidlat Tahimik, a name he has used for the past 27 years, is indigenous and "more Filipino."

He got the name from a character in his internationally acclaimed film "Mababangong Bangungot (Perfumed Nightmares)."

Buliyat later directed the local civil registrar to amend De Guia's name to Kidlat Tahimik in his birth certificate.

But the OSG blocked Buliyat's order before it became final by filing a motion for reconsideration.

The OSG assailed the decision as being contrary to law since De Guia "was unable to establish a compelling reason to justify his change of name."

In its motion, the OSG said none of the grounds provided for by law for change of name applies in De Guia's case.

It said the common causes for name change are:

* When the name is ridiculous, dishonorable or extremely difficult to write or pronounce;

FILMMAKER Eric de Guia has been denied the use of the moniker Kidlat Tahimik by the Office of the Solicitor General. But his lawyer, Reynaldo Cortes, vows that he would exhaust the law to effect the name change. TOOTS SOBERANO

* When the change is the result of a legal act; and
* When the change will avoid confusion.

Colonial past

The OSG said: "That his (De Guia's) given name bears traces of our colonial past is something which one cannot erase and blot out by the mere expedient use of an allegedly pure and indigenous Filipino name."

"Appellations with traces of Hispanic and American culture used and adopted by millions of Filipinos do not make them less a Filipino," it said.

But Buliyat disagreed with the OSG.

He said that in denying the OSG's motion for reconsideration on Dec. 18, 2003, Buliyat said, "the petition touches one of the requirements for valid reasons for change of name under Rule 103 of the Revised Rules of Court, which is when the change will avoid confusion."

He said the country should even thank De Guia for using Kidlat Tahimik.

"The petitioner (De Guia) is known legally and internationally as Kidlat Tahimik and through his excellent film performances, his works were cited to the credit of said name," he said.

"It is undeniable that the Philippines is a beneficiary of his dedicated distinctions and citations, emphasizing greatness, honor, pride and nationalistic zeal of the Filipinos," Buliyat added.

"The said name is the identity he is popularly known and should not be confused with any other name," he said.

Unique . . .

From page C1

erstwhile blind swordsman is forced to fight again when a samurai is hired to challenge him.

"Dixieland Daimyo" by **Kihachi Okatomo.** It is 1869, and the American Civil War has just ended. Some black men, now free, decide to go to Africa, the land of their ancestors. Each one has a musical instrument, and they play jazz.

But it turns out that they have been tricked by a wily Mexican, and are sailing, not for Africa, but Hong Kong! More problems crop up, and they eventually end up—in Japan. Unfortunately, they end up in the dungeon of Lord Uminogo's castle.

But their music turns out to be their salvation, as the lord falls in love with the jazz they're playing.

An all-night jam sessions ensues, and as dawn breaks, the country welcomes the new Meiji order of the emperor, and the end of the feudal system.

We've already given the schedule of screenings at UP. Here now is the festival's schedule at the CCP Dream Theater:

March 9 at 4 p.m., "Sanjuro." 7 p.m., "When the Rain Lifts." March 10 at 4 p.m., "Dixieland Daimyo." 7 p.m., "Life and Opinion of Masseur Ichi." March 11 at 4 p.m., "Samurai Banners." 7 p.m., "Sanjuro." March 12 at 4 p.m., "When the Rain Lifts." 7 p.m., "Dixieland Daimyo." March 13 at 1 p.m., "Life and Opinion of Masseur Ichi." 4 p.m., "Sanjuro." 7 p.m., "Samurai Banners."

Incubus on Asian tour

THE INCUBUS rock band is performing in Fukuoka, Japan on March 6, in Nagoya on March 8, and in Seoul, Korea on March 10, before coming to the Philippines for a show at 8:30 p.m. on March 12 at the CCP open grounds.

Incubus recently released its fifth album, "A Crow Left of the Murder," which quickly shot to second place on Billboard's Top 20 Albums list. The band's hits include "Drive," "Are You In?," "Pardon Me" and "Stellar."

Parenting convention

THE SECOND Philippine Parenting Convention will be held on March 13 and 14 at the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel. It features an interactive expo on the latest in family support, high impact plenary sessions, workshops, inspiring speakers, family bonding activities and entertainment. Call 920-0537.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

SM CITY NORTH EDSA 9295452

1	DRAGON VS. NINJA
2	ANNIE B
3	MILAN
4	COLD MOUNTAIN
5	SOMTHING'S GOTTA GIVE
6	GOTHIKA
7	DUPLEX
8	TORQUE

SM CITY CEBU 2313876

1	PERLAS AWARDS
2	COLD MOUNTAIN
3	HAUNTED MANSION
4	CHASING LIBERTY
5	ANNIE B
6	21 GRAMS
7	MILAN
8	RUNAWAY JURY

SM CITY BACOOR 4173868

1	DRAGON VS. NINJA
2	DUPLEX
3	TORQUE
4	MILAN
5	GOTHIKA
6	ANNIE B
7	KUYA
8	U-BELT

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO (088) 8562884

1	COLD MOUNTAIN
2	CHASING LIBERTY
3	ANNIE B
4	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT 8294975

1	MILAN
2	GOTHIKA
3	TORQUE
4	ANNIE B.

SM BICUTAN 7763055

1	TORQUE
2	ANNIE B
3	MILAN
4	GOTHIKA

SM CITY BAGUIO (074) 4464505

1	RUNAWAY JURY
2	DIABLO
3	THE GATHERING
4	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

SM STA. MESA 7149522 • 7161416

1	MILAN
2	COLD MOUNTAIN
3	GOTHIKA
4	WATER DEMON
5	TORQUE
6	DRAGON VS. NINJA
7	ANNIS B.
8	BONE SNATCHER
9	DUPLEX
10	NIGHTMARE

SM SOUTHMALL 8066888

1	NIGHTMARE
2	DUPLEX
3	GOTHIKA
4	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
5	DUDA/DOUBT
6	KUYA
7	ANNIE B
8	TORQUE
9	MILAN
10	DRAGON VS. NINJA

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 9350749

1	HAUNTED MANSION
2	BONE SNATCHER
3	DUPLEX
4	TORQUE
5	DRAGON VS. NINJA
6	MILAN
7	GOTHIKA
8	ANNIE B.
9	COLD MOUNTAIN
10	KUYA
11	U-BELT
12	NIGHTMARE

SM CITY MARILAO

1	KUYA
2	COLD MOUNTAIN
3	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
4	ANNIE B.

SM CITY ILOILO 3209422

1	U-BELT
2	RESERVED
3	HAUNTED MANSION
4	WRONG TURN
5	CHASING LIBERTY
6	COLD MOUNTAIN
7	RESERVED
8	MAGIC KITCHEN

SM MEGAMALL 6331501

1	LOST IN TRANSLATION RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 8306800
2	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
3	TORQUE
4	GOTHIKA
5	DUPLEX
6	BONE SNATCHER
7	NIGHTMARE
8	MILAN
9	ANNIE B
10	COLD MOUNTAIN
11	DRAGON VS. NINJA
12	RING: THE SPIRAL

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN 2514302

1	TORQUE
2	GOTHIKA
3	DRAGON VS. NINJA
4	ANNIE B

SM CITY MANILA 5239240

1	RING: THE SPIRAL
2	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
3	COLD MOUNTAIN
4	TORQUE
5	DUPLEX
6	GOTHIKA
7	DRAGON VS. NINJA
8	KUYA
9	MILAN
10	NIGHTMARE
11	BONE SNATCHER
12	ANNIE B

SM CITY DAVAO 2976998

1	RUNAWAY JURY
2	21 GRAMS
3	MILAN
4	HAUNTED MANSION
5	IN THE CUT
6	HAUNTED OFFICE

SM CITY PAMPANGA 7128915

1	GOTHIKA
2	RUNAWAY JURY
3	KUYA
4	MILAN
5	LOST IN TRANSLATION
6	ANNIE B

SM CITY LUCENA (042) 7108977-80

1	DUPLEX
2	IN THE CUT
3	MILAN
4	THE GATHERING

—THE— PODIUM CINEMA

1 TORQUE
11:00 FS/11:25
MF/1:20/3:15/5:10/7:05/
9:00/10:25 LFS/11:00
LMF/12:25 END

2 GOTHIKA
11:40 FS/12:10
MF/2:20/4:30/6:40/
8:50/10:30 LFS/11:00
LMF/12:40 END

For Seat Reservation, call 633 8976
LATE NIGHT SCREENING
DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS

PELIKULA LUNSAN 2004

SM Baguio MAR 5 | friday

11:00am | Values Oriented Shorts
1:30pm | Abong (Small Home) by Koji Imaizumi
4:00pm | Edades by Nick Deocampo
6:30pm | Zamboanga by Eduardu de Castro
9.00pm | City of God by Katia Lund

Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ALL DIGITAL SOUND
AYALA CINEMAS
PRESENTS

G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 MILAN	1 TORQUE	1 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 1.40, 4.20, 7.00, 9.40	THX 1 GOTHIKA 12.40 2.50, 5.00 7.35 9.25 11.30	THX 1 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
2 TORQUE	2 DUPLEX		THX 2 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 12.50 3.30 6.10 8.50 11.20	2 DUPLEX
3 ANNIE B.	THX 3 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 11.50 2.30 5.10 7.50 10.30	2 GOTHIKA 12.10, 2.30, 4.50, 7.10, 9.30	3 LOST IN TRANSLATION 1.50 4.00 6.10 8.20 10.30	3 MILAN
4 NINJA VS. DRAGON	4 MYSTIC RIVER		4 DUPLEX 1.25 3.20 5.15 7.10 9.05 11.00	4 RUNAWAY JURY
	5 BONE SNATCHER	REPERTORY'S FAME Mar. 6 & 7	5 TORQUE 1.10 3.30 5.30 7.30 9.30 11.30	5 LOST IN TRANSLATION
	6 GOTHIKA			
	7 MILAN			

For screening times, call 729-7777. Movies are subject to change without prior notice.
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Or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

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Filinvest Festival Cinema (Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DOLBY)	MILAN
2 (SDDS)	HAUNTED MANSION
3 (DTS)	TORQUE
4 (DOLBY DTS)	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
5 (DOLBY)	COLD MOUNTAIN
6 (SDDS)	GOTHIKA
7 (DOLBY)	DUPLEX
8 (DIGITAL)	ANNIE B
9 (DIGITAL)	NIGHTMARE
10 (DIGITAL)	DRAGON VS NINJA

Eastwood Cinemas (Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY)	SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
2 (DOLBY)	TORQUE
3 (DOLBY)	GOTHIKA
4 (DOLBY)	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

Masagana Cinema (Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1	ANNIE B
2	U BELT
3	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Starmall Movies www.clickthecity.com.ph (Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986

1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
3	ANNIE B
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)	TORQUE
5	U BELT

Metropolis Star www.clickthecity.com.ph (Alabang) tel 850.4285

1	DRAGON VS. NINJA
2	U BELT
3	ANNIE B
4	MILAN
5	GOTHIKA
6	TORQUE

Star www.clickthecity.com.ph (Las Pinas) tel 873.5004

1	GHOST HOUSE
2	TWIN EFFECTS

Premiere Cinema (Makati City) tel 892.2503 — SUROUND THX

Centre Plaza Cinema (Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	KUYA
2	HAUNTED MANSION

Sunshine (FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1	ANNIE B
2	
3	
4	

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City (Manila) tel 734.8588

5	
6	RESERVE
7 (DTS)	
8 (SDDS)	
9 (DOLBY)	

Gotesco Grand Central (Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1	U BELT
2	ANNIE B
3	MILAN
4 (SDDS)	DRAGON VS. NINJA
5	KUYA
6 (DOLBY)	TORQUE
7 (DTS)	GOTHIKA
8	WATER DEMON
9	GHOST HOUSE

Gotesco Commonwealth tel 951.0083

1	RESERVE
2 (SDDS)	
3 (DTS)	
4 (DOLBY)	
5	

Gotesco Ortigas tel 656.6795

1	MILAN
2	ANNIE B
3 (DTS)	WATER DEMON
4	U BELT
5 (SDDS)	

Universal (Manila) tel 733.2470

1	RESERVE

Dilson (Manila) tel 734.7724

Dilson Lords

Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	ANNIE B
2	TORQUE
3	GOTHIKA
4	DRAGON VS NINJA

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto SUPER CINERAMA tel 733.4238

1 (DOLBY)	TORQUE
2	NIGHTMARE
3	GOTHIKA
4	ANNIE B
5	U BELT

Berma Cinema (Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1	U BELT
2	MILAN

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Araneta Center
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1	CLOSED
2	CLOSED
3 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ANNIE B
4 (SDDS)	GOTHICA
5 (DTS)	TORQUE
6	DRAGON VS NINJA
7	WATER DEMON

Jade Cinema (Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	RUN AWAY JURY
2	ANNIE B
3 DTS EX	GOTHIKA
4	WHISING STAIRS

Cine Nepo (Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1	KUYA
2	ANNIE B
3 (DOLBY)	GOTHIKA
4 (DTS)	RUN AWAY JURY

Cine Nepo (Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1	ANNIE B
2	KUYA
3 (DOLBY)	HAUNTED MANSION
4 (DTS)	CHASING LIBERTY

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall (Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1	WATER DEMON
2	GOTHIKA
3 (DTS)	ANNIE B

Cinema 2000 Waltermart (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	WATER DEMON
2 (DTS)	ANNIE B
3 (DOLBY)	GOTHIKA
4	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall (Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1	ANNIE B
2 (DOLBY)	GOTHIKA
3 (DTS)	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
4	WATER DEMON

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix (Urdaneta) tel (075) 568.6771

1	KUYA
2	CHASING LIBERTY
3 (DOLBY)	HAUNTED MANSION

Cinema 2000 Metrotown (Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	ANNIE B
2	CHASING LIBERTY
3 (DOLBY)	KUYA
4 (DTS)	WISHING STAIRS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart (Plaridel) tel (044) 795-3320

1	ANNIE B
2	HAUNTED MANSION
3	RUN AWAY JURY

Lianas Cinema (Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)	WATER DEMON
2	PALIGAYAHIN MO AKO
3	U BELT
4 (DTS)	GHOST HOUSE

Lianas MovieCity (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	GOTHIKA
2	ANNIE B
3 (DTS)	WATER DEMON
4	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
5	GHOST HOUSE

Olivarez Tri-Cinema (Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	ANNIE B
2	GHOST HOUSE

Olivarez Los Baños tel (049) 249.2558

1	GOTHIKA
2	ANNIE B
3	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

Mega Center Mall (Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1	U BELT
2	KUYA
3 (DTS)	CHASING LIBERTY
4 (DOLBY)	ANNIE B

Cabuyao (Laguna City) tel 520.8914

1 (DTS)	RESERVE

Fiesta World Mall (Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	U BELT
2	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
3	COLD MOUNTAIN
4	ANNIE B

Emperor (Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1	ANNIE B
2	U BELT

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

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NOW SHOWING

Looking for angels

CHILD actor Bryan Homecillo of "Munting Tinig," Rashimae Manantan of "Filipinas," and product endorsers Kristine Joy Morata, Mark Angelo and Victoria Hanes are just some of the products of the search for little angels conducted by RDH Entertainment Network.

The 2004 search is now open to kids aged four to nine.

Send the child's bio-data and close-up pictures to Rm. 301 Wilvic Bldg. at 96 V. Luna Rd., Quezon City. For more information, call 4330149. Deadline for submission is March 30, 2004.

Susan campaigns alone for FPJ

From page C1

Jessica Soho that he had a lovechild by movie starlet Ana Marin, Susan had supported her husband.

During the launching of the "Cinema Paraiso 2" on Feb. 4, Susan, responding to reporters' queries on Poe's lovechild, had said, "you don't deny your child."

"More than anything, honesty is very important, especially when it concerns a child," the actress had added.

Political huddle

Susan also kept away from Poe and his political allies, who were in a huddle a few hours before the the Supreme Court handed down its decision on Wednesday on the actor's citizenship.

A source on Wednesday disclosed to INQUIRER Entertainment that Poe and Senators Gringo Honasan, Tessie Aquino-Oreta, and Vicente "Tito" Sotto III, his campaign managers, were discussing their next moves and planning their political strategies.

Fund-raising

One of the topics discussed in the meeting was the solicitation of campaign funds for Poe's nationwide rallies.

"They want to be prepared for everything," said the source.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that Poe is a natural-born Filipino.

Full blast

Poe started to go on full blast with his campaign after the Supreme Court ruling.

He visited the provinces of Samar and Leyte last Thursday.

On March 24, the Artista Para Kay FPJ, a group of Poe supporters from the entertainment industry, will host a concert at the Guadalupe Park in Makati City.

Rowell Santiago will direct the concert.

"The show will not be for FPJ alone," said the source. "It will be a call for peaceful and honest elections."

The return of Philippe Charriol /F1

EDITOR'S rave BOARD

DIANE KEATON wears summer in the Hamptons in her latest film.

White is right

DID you notice how white dominated the Oscar awards night? Not only in the sense that all the presentors were white, except for the Smiths (Will and Jada Pinkett) and Oprah Winfrey, or the nominees were white, except for Djimon Hounsou ("In America") but also fashion-wise? Renée Zellweger looked like a bride in a Carolina Herrera gown, what with its bow and train; also in white were Sandra Bullock (Oscar de la Renta), Angelina Jolie (Marc Bouwer) and Uma Thurman.

Diane Keaton should have donned white instead of the black Ralph Lauren tux, shirt, tie, bowler hat and leather gloves that she wore on Oscar night. Black just didn't hold any magic for her that evening whereas white made her shine at the Golden Globe awards where she won the best actress trophy for her role in "Something's Gotta Give." After all, Keaton wears a lot of white in this sunny, romantic comedy

2

where she plays fiftysomething playwright Erica Barry who is caught between two unlikely lovers, played by the eternally endearing Jack Nicholson and the heavenly body Keanu Reeves.

White conveys her lightness of being throughout the movie, but that has a lot to do too with Keaton being physically light, lean and *scoo* in shape. It takes a lot of nerve to wear white and a lot more to undress before the camera—and the naughty Jack—at her age, but Keaton pulls it off with aplomb.

"What's with the turtleneck?" asks dirty old man Harry, the rap record producer who doesn't date anyone over 30. It's the middle of summer and Keaton is wearing one but, you know, because it's white and, one suspects, it's cotton, she looks comfy and cool.

There she is, too, in a white suit at dinner (yes, you can wear white in the evening), her heart crumbling to pieces during this confrontation scene that's definitely an Oscar moment. In most scenes the stylish Keaton is seen in casual white tops and khaki pants. For a shopping trip to the deli she totes a bag that's big, beautiful and, you guessed it, white.

Now, white shirts I can wear all the time, but a white tote is something else. And it's not easy to shop for a good white bag that you can use every

3

day until it gets too dirty for comfort.

Most of the ones I've seen around look, feel and exude synthetic. Luckily, Furla's Spring-Summer line this year has a few standouts, like the **(1)** roomy Harbour, which looks a lot like what Keaton carries in the movie (if it isn't, it will sub beautifully), **(2)** the Stirr Up, and **(3)** the Matterhorn. You can't go wrong with white if you live in a country where there are practically only two seasons—hot and hotter. But do say no to white polyester shirts.

The Cotton Council International (CCI), the export marketing arm of the United States' cotton industry, recommends the following fabrics for your basic, timeless white shirts: cotton faille (lightweight and sheer), cotton batiste (sheer muslin with a nice sheen), cotton satteen (smooth woven fabric with a luster that's perfect for more formal wear), cotton poplin (delicately ribbed and soft), and cotton oxford (rugged and from heavier yarn, best for button-downs).

There's nothing like loose, white cotton shirts to uncomplicate a long, hot summer. *CBF*

WE'VE MOVED THE GREAT OUTDOORS...INDOORS

COURTYARDS OF Portofino

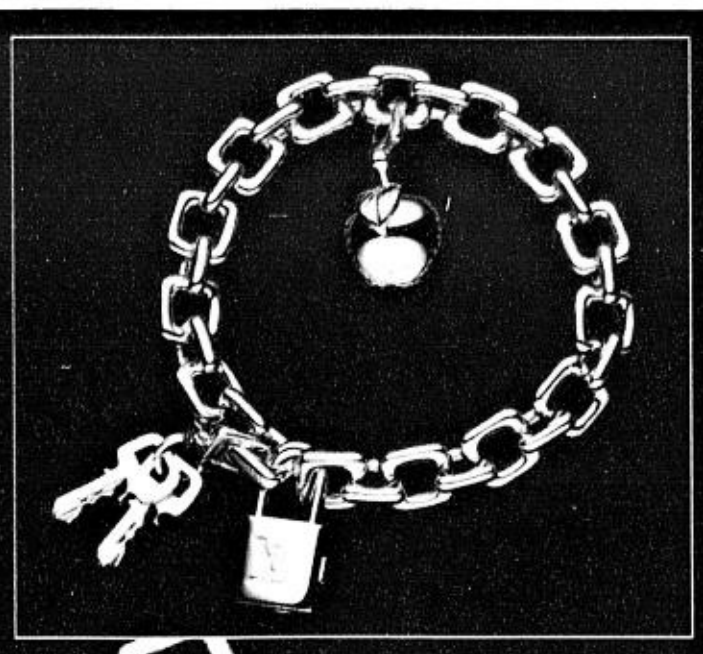
Courtyards of Portofino offers a unique feature right at home: the benefits of the great outdoors. You enjoy natural light, a cool breeze and open space through an inner courtyard similar to classic homes in Italy.

Adding to the character of the home, porticos, distinctly Italian arches, surround the courtyard. From the courtyard, you have access to the *casitas*, ground level rooms ideal for your guests. Outside, the old world charm of the whole property is made even more pronounced with cobblestones accenting the roads, along with flowers in terra cotta pots.

And these courtyard homes surround central courtyards, an ingenious design that's uniquely Brittany. Enjoy what's great outdoors even as you're indoors. Get a Property Preview. Call 850 2868, 850 6986 or 850 3084. Or email us at mktg@brittany.com.ph.

Brittany CORPORATION

Charms dedicated to New York



LV Big Apple charm in diamond (leftmost) and Big Apple pendants dressed in emeralds, rubies and yellow sapphires; (inset) Big Apple yellow gold charm bracelet

AFTER CELEBRATING Paris with the Eiffel Tower charm bracelet, Louis Vuitton has come up with a Big Apple charm dedicated to New York City.

The charms celebrate the opening of the brand's new New York shop, located on the corner of 57th Street and Fifth Avenue. The New York location is Louis Vuitton's 316th store worldwide and its largest ever.

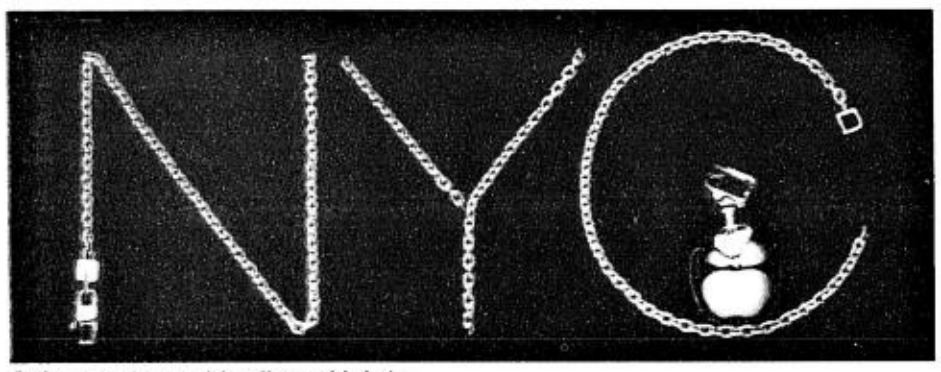
The Big Apple charm comes in two versions. The red gold version will remain exclusive to the United States stores for a month after the launch of the New York store. The diamond version will be a Fifth Avenue exclusive for the same period.

Louis Vuitton also introduces a line of pendants that will include the Big Apple charm dressed in rubies, yellow sapphires or emeralds. All three will only be available on Fifth Avenue.

In the Philippines, Louis Vuitton is located at G/F Greenbelt 4, Ayala Center, Makati City.

NIKKI Taylor

"SEX and the City's" Kristin Davis and a model pose at the Louis Vuitton 150th anniversary party and store opening celebration in New York City. PHOTOS: AFP



BIG Apple charm with yellow gold chain

SUPERMODELS Naomi Campbell and Iman

Gearing up for sun and sand season

RUSTAN'S Department Store presents its latest collections for the summer season.

The men's line includes the stylishly casual designs of 4YOU, Salt and Mirto, the sporty pieces from Zegna Spurt, and the classic coolness of Oleg Cassini and Dunhill. Tumi, on the other hand, offers its range of luggage goods to ease the hassles of summer travels.

Ladies can have their pick of choice numbers from Amichi, Sinequanone and Missy, as well from chic private labels like Jill, Culte Femme, Criselda Lontok, Private Moments and Tocca.

RUSTAN'S U offers summer fashion by Amichi, Muchacha, Salt, Oleg Cassini and Jam. U's first stand-alone boutique is at Shangri-La Mall.

For active gear, there's Everlast and Danskin. Perfect fit denims from Mavi, Blue Cult and Earl Jeans are also ideal for lazy road trips.

Summer nights are always fun when decked out in dresses from Rustan's house brands like Betsey Johnson, Tahari, BCBG Max Azria and ABS Evening, among others. Complete the look with shoes and bags from Lady Rustan, Tha Sak and Longchamp.

Of course, swimwear is a must this summer, so check out brands like Christina, Little Kiss and Solar Tan Thru Suits.

Manila's young fashionistas, meanwhile, are having their fill of U Men, U Girls and YVIP, as well as imported brands like XOXO, Hollywood Jeans, Hotkiss, Dollhouse, Fresh Jive, Soul Edge and Rusty.

Rustan's, with partners Hotel InterContinental Manila, BMW Prestige Cars Makati and Princess Cruises, brings together all these brands in one major event on March 11 at 6 p.m. at the poolside of the Hotel InterContinental.

Guest designer heats up summer collection

SUMMER sizzles at Regatta as the clothing brand synonymous to the outdoors introduces guest designer Tippi Ocampo's breezy collection.

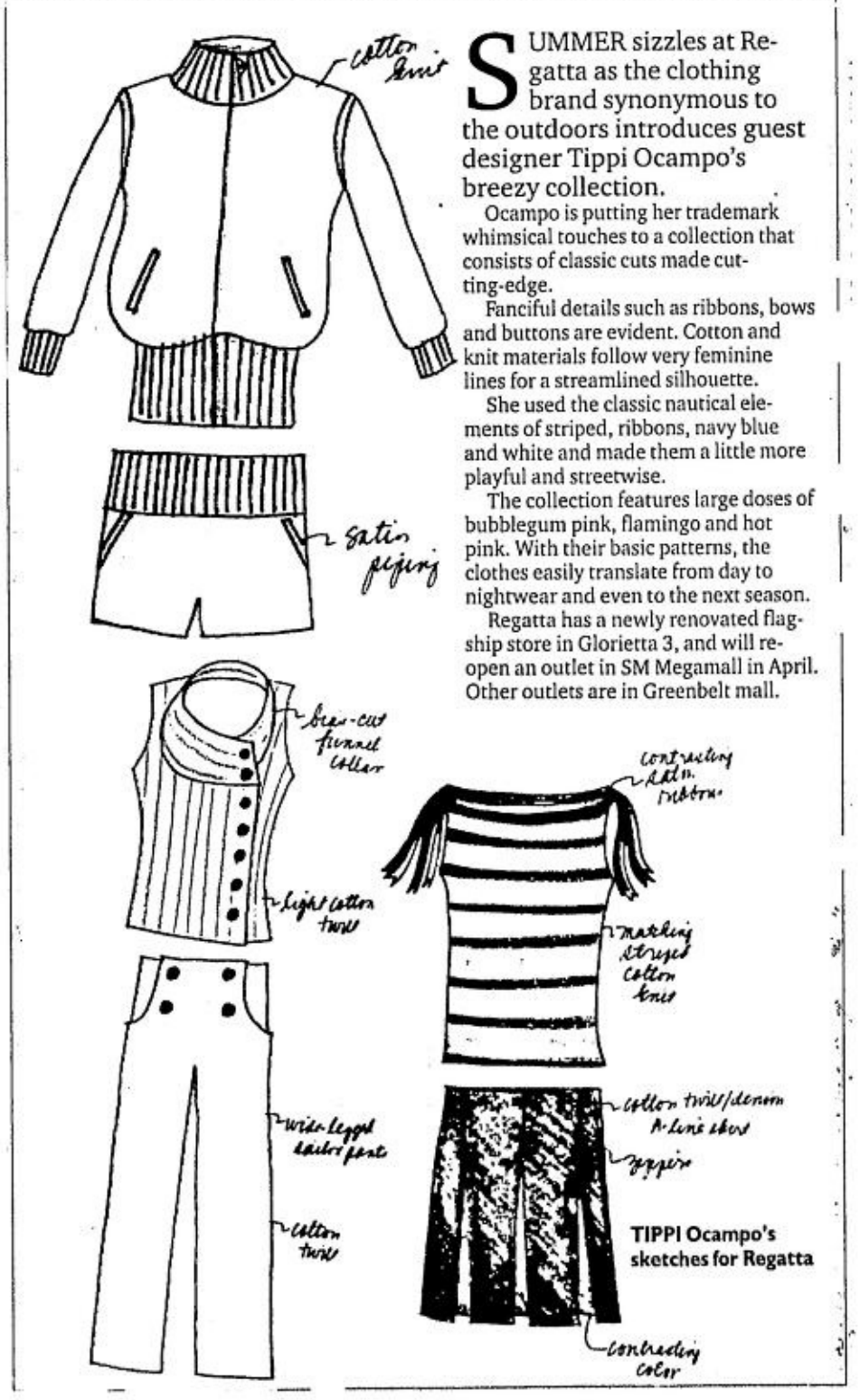
Ocampo is putting her trademark whimsical touches to a collection that consists of classic cuts made cutting-edge.

Fanciful details such as ribbons, bows and buttons are evident. Cotton and knit materials follow very feminine lines for a streamlined silhouette.

She used the classic nautical elements of striped, ribbons, navy blue and white and made them a little more playful and streetwise.

The collection features large doses of bubblegum pink, flamingo and hot pink. With their basic patterns, the clothes easily translate from day to nightwear and even to the next season.

Regatta has a newly renovated flagship store in Glorietta 3, and will reopen an outlet in SM Megamall in April. Other outlets are in Greenbelt mall.



TIPPI Ocampo's sketches for Regatta

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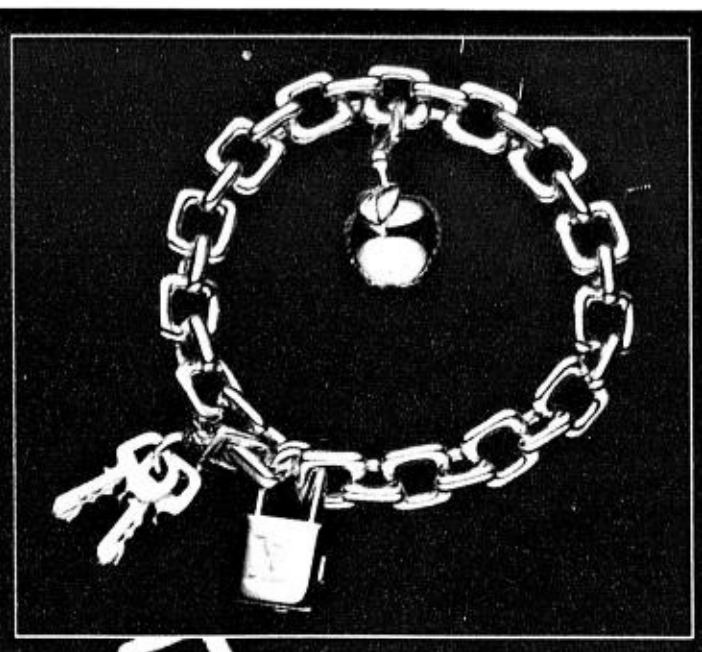
Charms dedicated to New York



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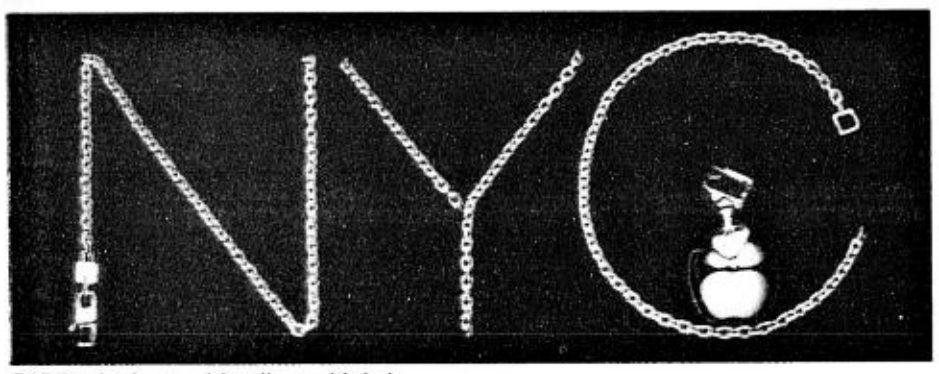

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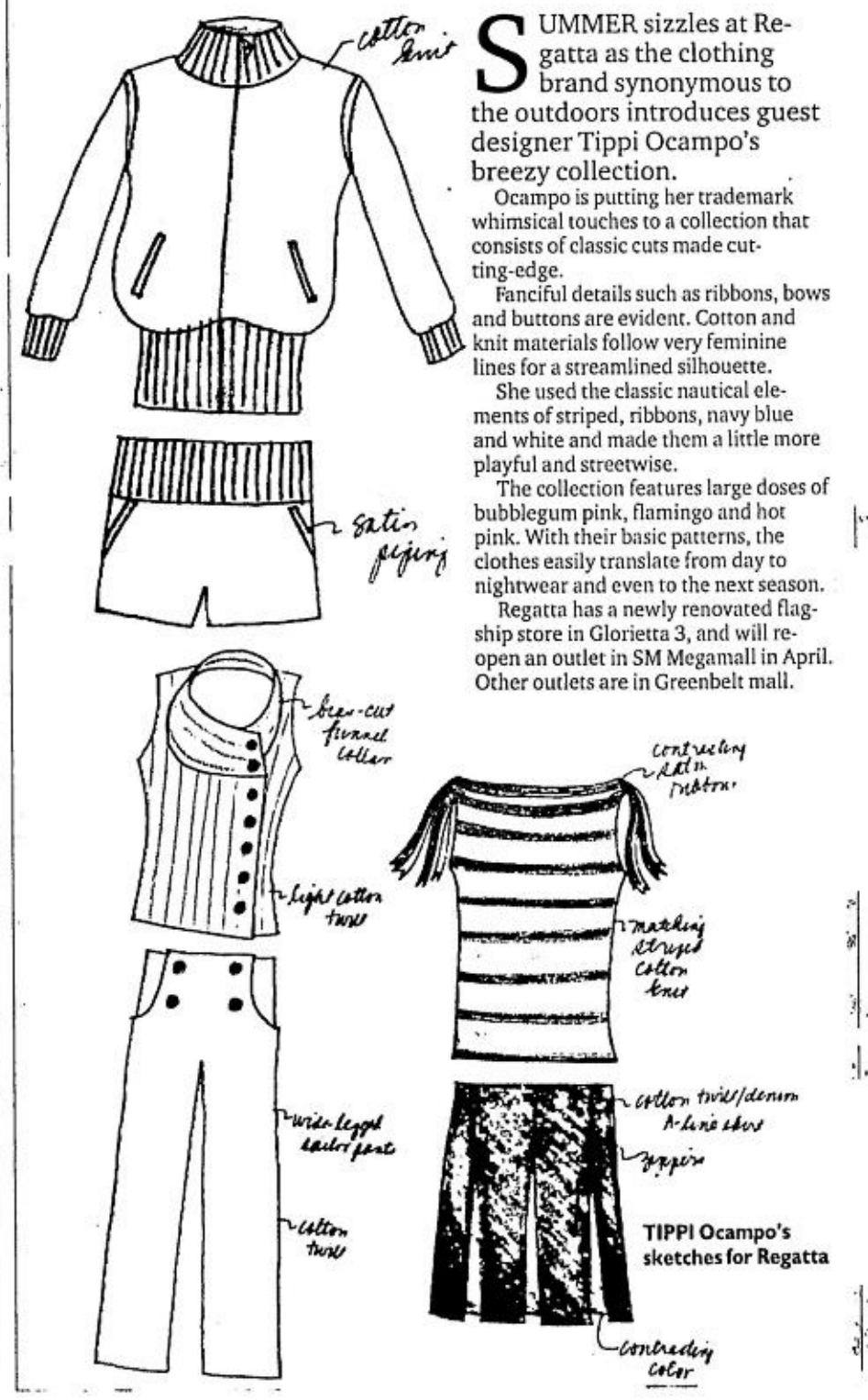

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The long and short of nail extensions

From page D4

ing them a square top with oval edges. I had perfect nails for the first time in my life, and they looked real!

Leslie is adamant that the service level of all her salons be at par with the California State Board of Cosmetology standards. Well, judging from the number of American and European women flocking to her salon for acrylic fills and nail extensions, her dedication to quality is paying off.

Benefits

• Medium was the perfect length for me, and the sheer pink shade I chose looked so clean. Other patrons described the look as sexy but classy.

• Once in a while, my nails brush up against my face accidentally, but so far, there have been no scratches.

• The polish lasts for two weeks without chipping and dries fast without bubbles.

• The extensions are really strong. Occasionally, when I text or call, they would get jammed between my computer keyboards or hit the edges of tables, but there's been no damage.

NAIL art in a jiffy

• The process will immensely benefit nail biters out there, and makes perfectly shaped nails accessible to anyone in a jiffy. (For perfect square pedicures, look for Mhar or Elaine.)

Drawbacks

• I have to go back for a fill every two weeks, because once the nail grows, a depression appears between the acrylic and the real nail. The salon also has to make sure that water has not entered the depression, to prevent any fungus infection.

• Typing can be tough, as I keep hitting the wrong letters. It took me a week to adjust.

• When your nails get too long, you become a slave to them. Turning aircon knobs, zipping up a dress, picking up small stuff and opening soda cans can be an ordeal.

• When you decide to remove the extension, the real nail underneath weakens for a while until it grows out.

California Nails and Day Spa is located at Unit C G/F, LPL Manor, 116 Leviste St., Salcedo Village, Makati City, tel. 8132927. Other branches: Parañaque, 8427935; Greenhills, 7229245; Makati, 8127001; and Alabang, 8424902.

WINNING HAIRSTYLISTS
The winners of the 3rd Philippine Hairdressing Awards (PHA) last October 2003 will represent the country in the prestigious Asia Hairdressing Awards (AHA) to be held in Hong Kong on March 8. This year's winner of the AHA Hairdresser of the Year will have a chance to go to London and attend the British Hairdressing Awards ceremony. Photo shows the PHA winners: Commercial Style champion Mar Montuya, formerly of David's Salon; Best Creative Salon Team winners Joseph Claravall and Danny Katalbas (winner, Philippine Hairdresser of the Year and Best in Avant-Garde); Lourd Ryan Ramos and Glenn Roxas of Emphasis Salon; Jason Bañares (winner, Young Artist of the Year); and John Magno (winner, Men's Style competition), formerly of Saga Salon.
Now on its third year, the PHA and AHA were launched by Schwarzkopf Professional to recognize, honor, and reward talented individuals in the hairdressing industry.

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The long and short of nail extensions

LESLIE Matta worked in a nail salon in Los Angeles for 20 years before opening her own salon in Manila.

I met up with her in one of her franchise branches called California Nails and Day Spa, where I intended to get floaters, an acrylic coating over my short manicured nails, so the nail polish would stay for about two weeks without chipping.

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

The salon offers one-of-a-kind acrylic nail extensions. Matta says her biggest clients in LA were Playboy playmates, so she was a regular in the Playboy mansion and even met Hugh Hefner.

Now, aside from their obvious (ahem) assets, Playboy bunnies are people I really admire for their long, glamorous, sexy nails.

As a writer who types endlessly, I find it impossible to keep such nails. They would chip, break or split after a certain length, so I've had no choice but to keep them short—just past my fingertips.

Not fakes

As Matta explains it, their nails are really acrylic extensions, not press-on fakes. But only the bottom half is real; fake ones are glued to the tips, and acrylic applied to the whole thing.

That was the clincher. I wanted nail extensions on the spot, and was assigned to trained nail technician Connie. I wanted long nails right away, but I was talked into getting something medium-length first, so as not to hamper me in my daily chores.

I thought medium-length would look corny as bridal nails, but I was wrong. It turns out bridal nails are classified as in between short and medium!

However, medium-length is already long by ordinary people's standards. But that was the exact shape and length I wanted. And that's what I got.

Applying the acrylic is the most important step, because this covers up the demarcation of the real nail from the extension, and it corrects the nail shape to get that coveted slight curve downwards.

Connie also filed the nails, giv-

THE LONG/ D3

BRIDAL nails: Between short and medium length

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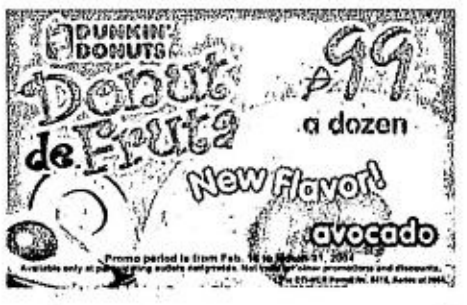

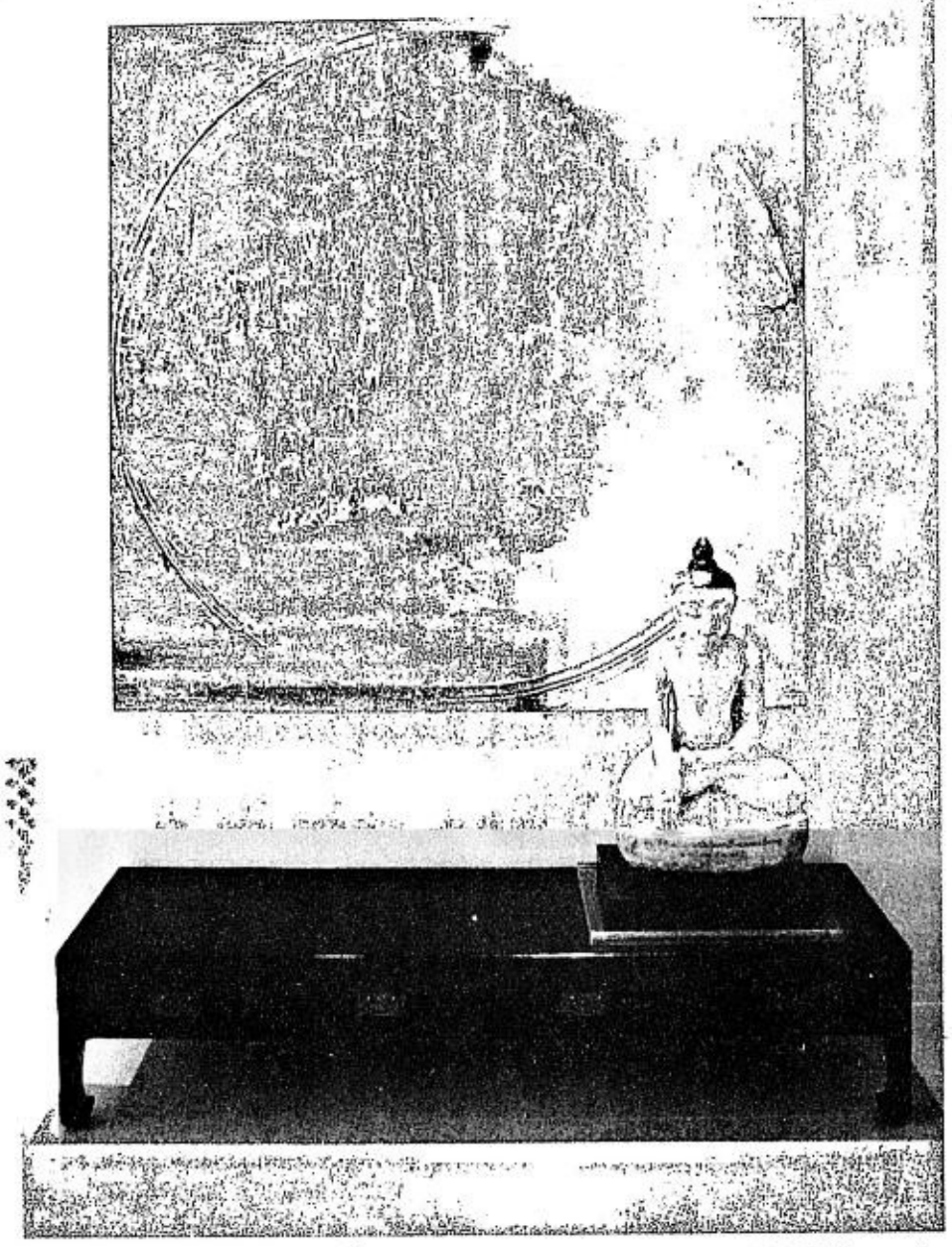

A CORNER near the main door features Gus Albor's "Ether in G minor 7," an alabaster Buddha and a black lacquer low lute table.

Order and harmony atop the city

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Jim Gulao Punzalan

THIS young banker's love for minimalist furniture pieces, Asian antiques and artworks by contemporary Filipino artists is still very much evident in his new home, a one-bedroom affair with a sweeping view of Makati's central business district.

The time and effort he put into his "dream project," he says, set it apart from his two previous high-rise dwellings.

Whereas he left almost everything before to his architect and contractor, this time he personally oversaw his latest acquisition's renovation—from the sleek track lights that went with the ceiling, to the shiny, off-white granite tiles in the living room that replaced the generic-looking floor that came with the new unit.

That he managed to do this despite his killer schedule made his involvement all the more memorable.

"I was content to simply choose the paint before leaving everything to them," he says. "This time, however, it was different, as I collaborated with architect Francis Sakay Jr. to achieve my vision."

Clear objective

It took them a little over two months to refashion several existing elements before he was finally able to move in before Christmas.

Before they went to work, however, the two agreed on one objective: an uncluttered setting that will provide its owner not

ORDER/ E2

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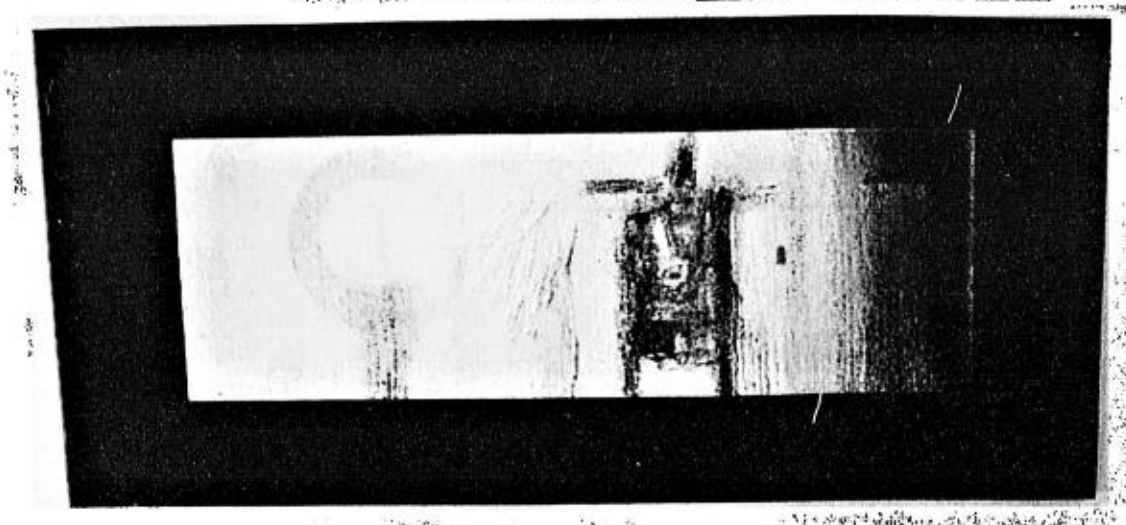
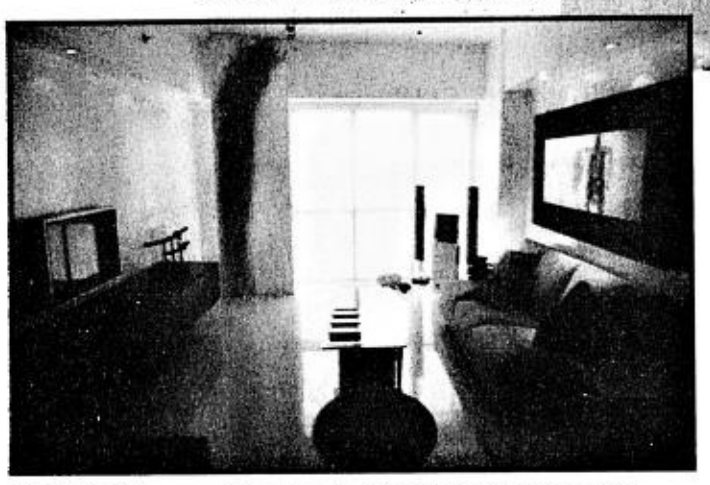
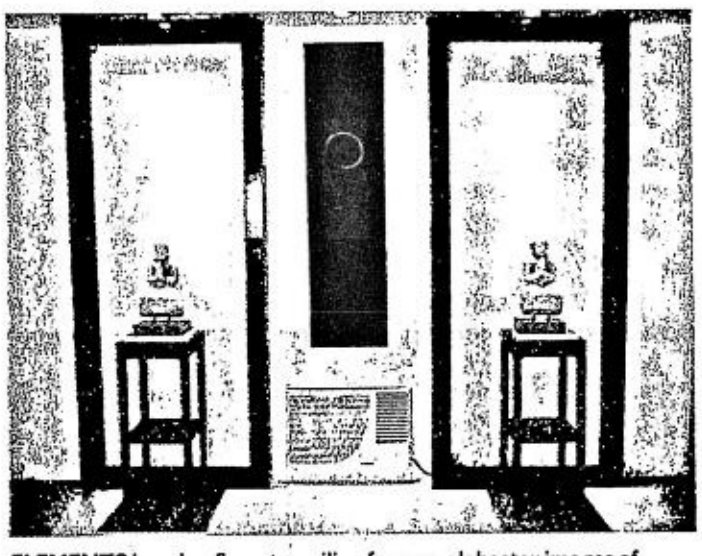


LAO Lianben's "Artist in his Studio" provides the modern living room with an unobtrusive focal point. Below it is the "Baisity" sofa, which is wedged between a pair of "T60" side tables. Like most of the banker's furniture pieces, these were designed by Antonio Citterio for B&B Italia.

"POWER of the Brush," Lao Lianben's 10-foot-tall acrylic work, and a pair of old samurai swords underscore the owner's love for combining old and new.



THE LIVING room, with a sweeping view of the Makati central business district, combines contemporary furniture and minimalist artworks. The upright Bang & Olufsen sound system by the window and three framed paintings by Lao Lianben on the Meta coffee table are among the owner's prized possessions.



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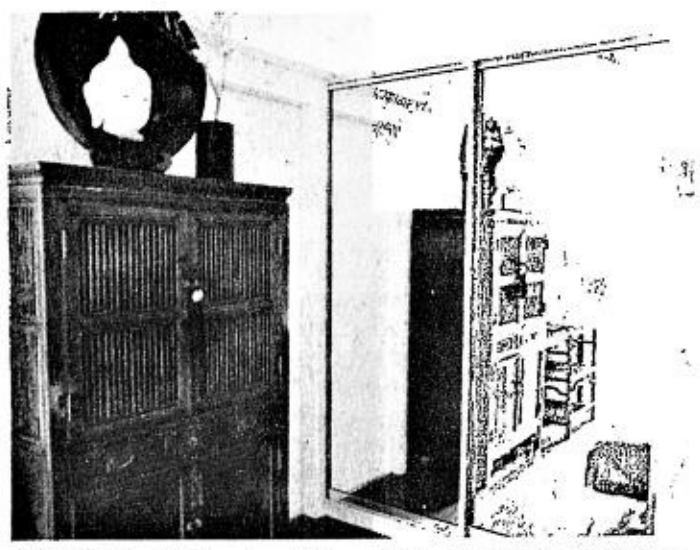

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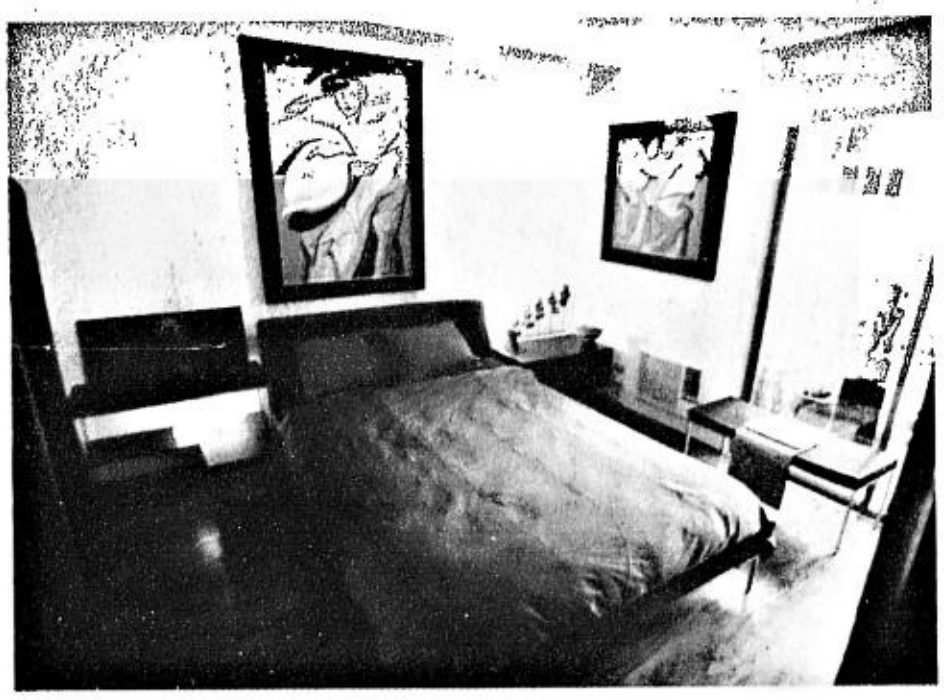

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Order and harmony atop the city

A banker invests hours and dreams into renovating his home and comes up with a winner

From page E1

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Meanwhile, Lao's "Power of the Brush," a 10-foot tall painting by the corner, gives the living room an illusion of height.

Black elements

To keep the look from becoming too antiseptic, the owner threw a number of Oriental furniture and accent pieces into the mix. A white wall by the dining room, for instance, comes to life thanks to several black elements that come in pairs: floor-to-ceiling frames and alabaster images of Buddhist monks perched on two separate pedestals in wenge finish from Silk Road.

Wedged between the pair of frames are two works by Lao ("Thinking Zen #1" and "#2"), which the banker combined into one.

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The same harmony and order extend to the lone bedroom, never mind if the banker has chosen warmer shades as reflected in BenCab's "Sabel" series, a pair of acrylic paintings in earth tones, and dark brown *narra* planks for the flooring.

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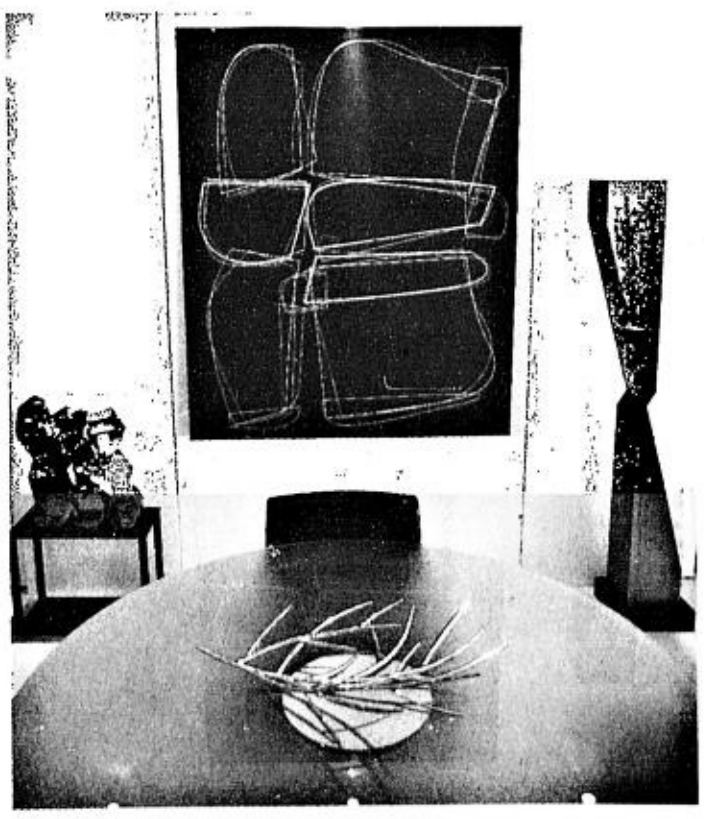
LOR Calma's brass sculpture called "Dreams"



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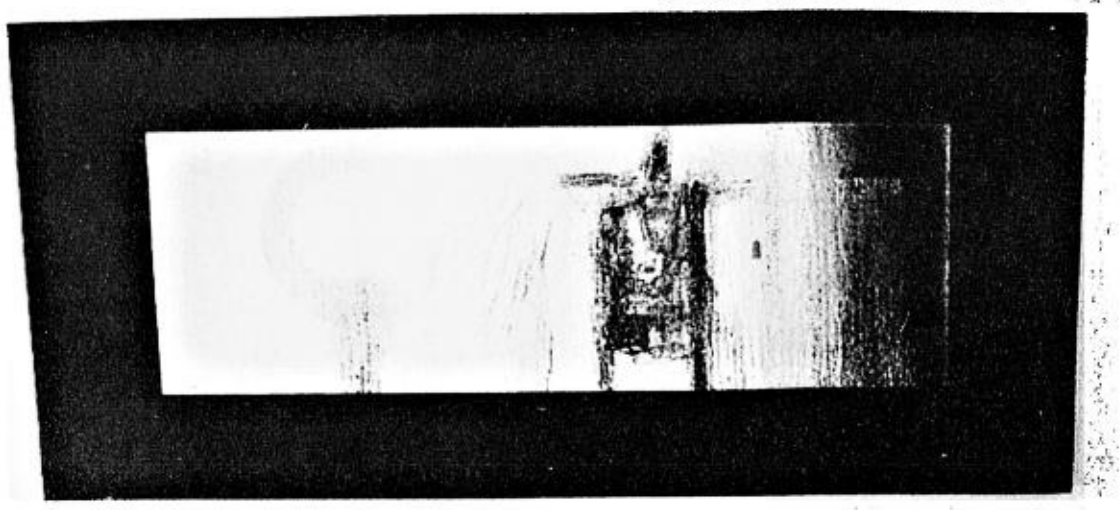

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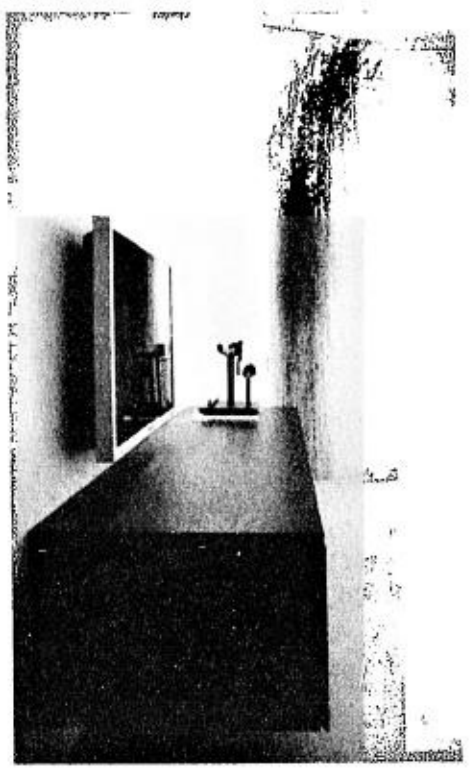

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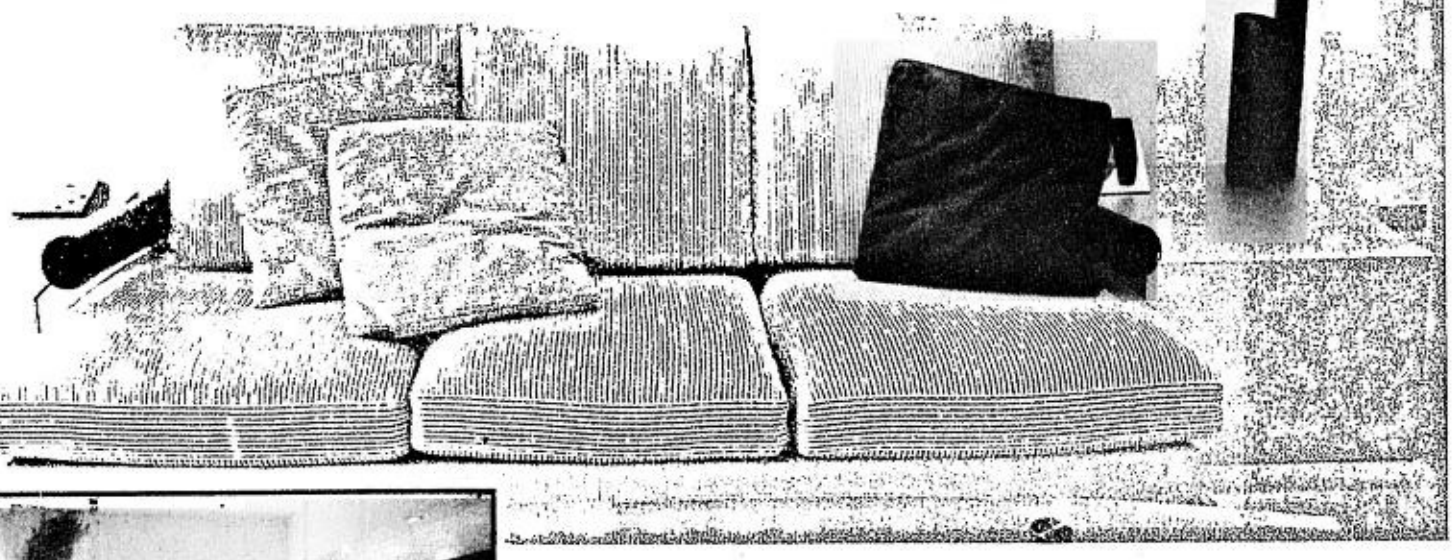

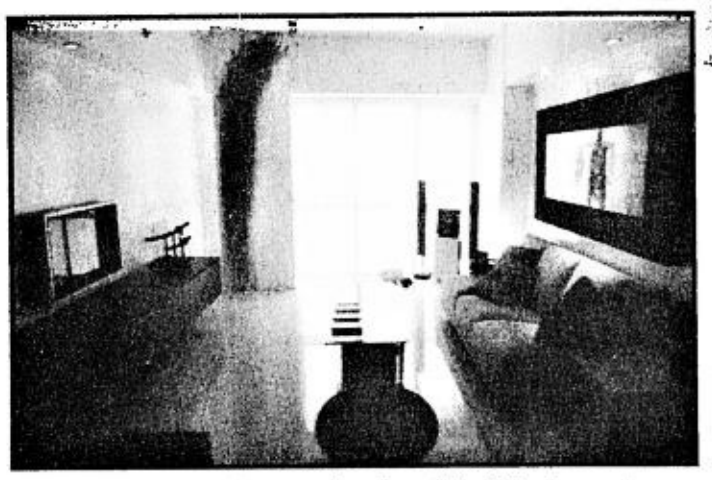

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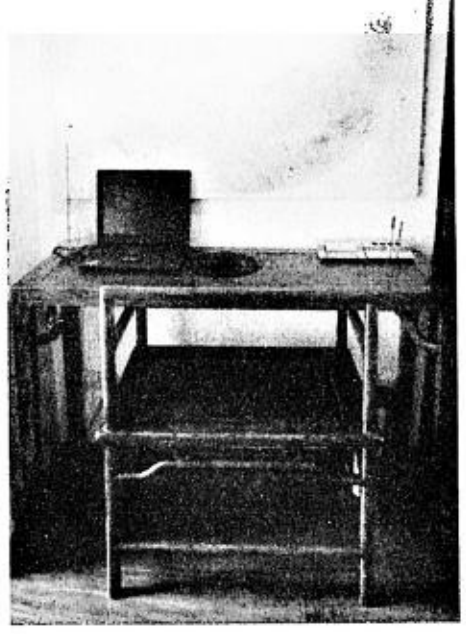

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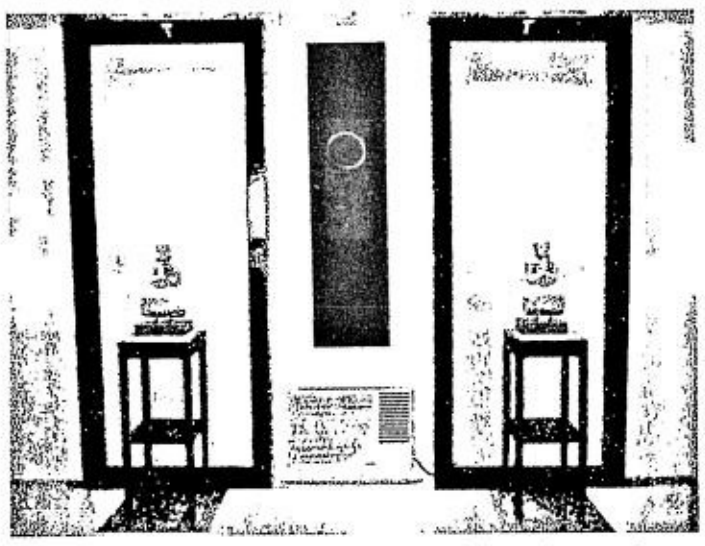

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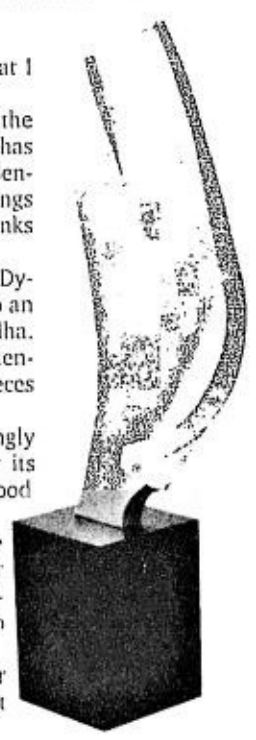

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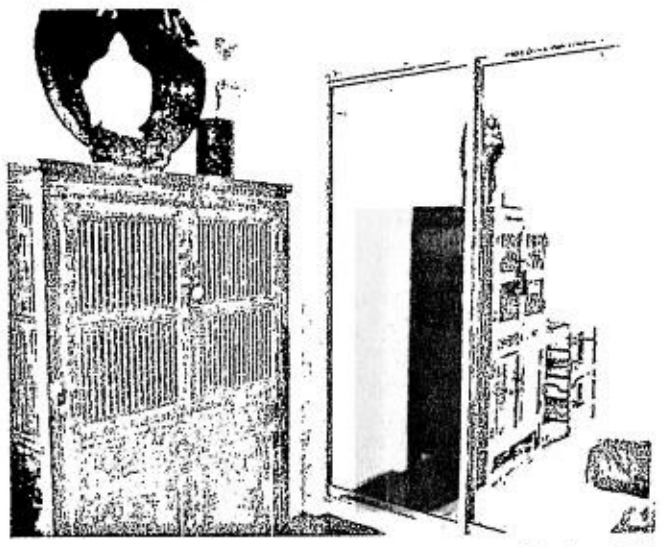

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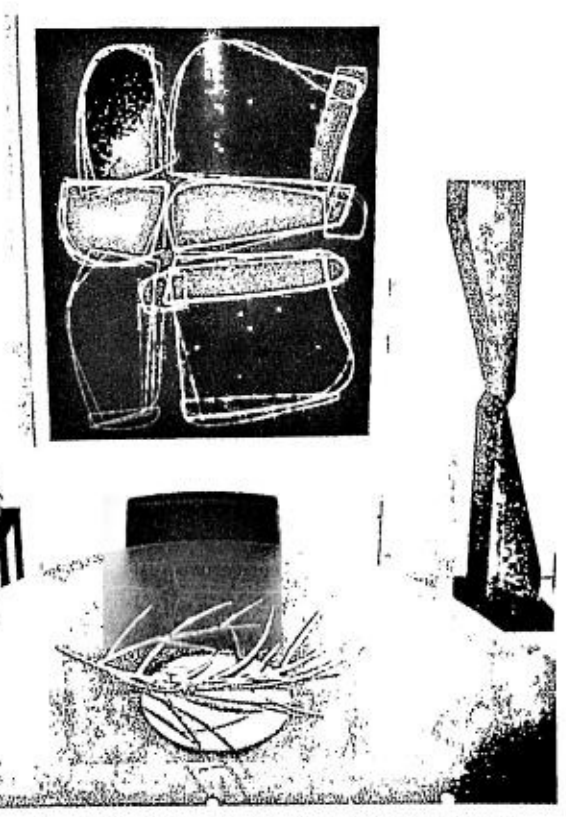

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Lessons from a children's book

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda

WHEN I'm in a book store, I like to browse in the children's section not only to check out new editions of old fairy tales for the kids at home, but also to find out the latest in environmental publications for children. Like most lessons in life, the earlier young people learn about the value of nature, the deeper their appreciation for it is going to be as they grow up.

Children's book authors and publishers seem to be aware of this, judging by the number of books meant to introduce children to the wonder and beauty of their surroundings. There are books about planet Earth, seas and rivers, mountains, plants, forests. The subjects may be contained in one volume or separate books, whatever makes learning easier.

One of the books I eventually bought after a long browsing was "Protecting Our Forests," apparently one of several titles in the Junior Library of Ecology series, published by the Learners Press Private Limited, New Delhi. It was the first time I had come across anything from this publisher, so I welcomed the opportunity to learn about it. (Unfortunately, hardly any information was provided in that volume.)

The book is only 32 pages thick (excluding the covers) but each page is filled with colored illustrations that add to its educational value and visual attraction. The first part of the book is a lesson on the forest as ecosystem. It introduces the reader to the living things that inhabit it.

From there, the author (whose name, incidentally, is not given) explains what happens when the forest ecosystem is disturbed. Such disturbance may come from natural causes, as when fire breaks out due to dry weather or spontaneous combustion. But damage can also be caused by human beings, which is the worse case because carelessness or complete disregard for the safety of the forest may have been involved.

The latter seems to be common here, illegal logging being the most dangerous example. So there seems to be an urgent need to let children know as early as possible of the harmful effects of such disturbances. They must learn that while forests put at risk by natural causes can grow again, damage is more likely to be permanent when trees are cut down with axes or chainsaws. When trees are reduced to stumps, they are considered dead.

The effects of deforestation are known to most of us grownups, although I must admit I still get surprised and sad when I learn that certain places get flooded after a heavy downpour, even if it is of short duration.

But that's what happens when trees disappear from a forest or watershed. Floods will surely occur and soil will erode for there will be no more roots to absorb the rainwater and keep the soil in place.

That's how simple this lesson is. While there doesn't seem to be any record of loss of life and property caused by mindless logging, the effects are quite evident. There really is no reason why it should not be clear to everyone. Although there are other reasons besides destruction of the ecosystem for conserving and maintaining forests sustainably, it is a good enough motivation.

At the end of the book is a short glossary defining such terms as biotope, decomposer, humus and trophic level, all household words to concerned environmentalists, but jargon to those who can't care less.

If I mention this "primer" on forest care now, it is because the election campaigns are reaching their peak. Candidates will be assuring us of their programs for agricultural sufficiency and food security, of a burgeoning economy, peace accords in our foreign and local relations, poverty alleviation, and all those ideals.

But if concern for the environment stays at the bottom of the list, none of those programs will take off. For, if we get down to it, everything in life has to do with the ground we tread on, the air we breathe, the water we drink; whether we do these in the mountains, forests, seas and rivers; and how we share these with the other creatures that inhabit these 7,000 isles with us. How can we be effectively governed without these considerations?

So shouldn't we learn our lesson now, start like children, if we must?

E-mail the author at dorisnuyda@yahoo.com

THIS LANDSCAPE, designed by Oliver Ang for Landscape Unlimited, answers the needs and activities of the owner.

Make your own garden

LANDSCAPER Jerome de Jesus, consultant of Green 2000 Garden Center's Landscape Unlimited, gives tips on how to start your own garden.

• Know yourself. Before starting anything, de Jesus says visualize yourself in the garden and list the activities you and your family will do.

• Make sure house and garden designs complement each other. Many houses now are inter-connected with the garden. If this is your first time to do a garden, ask experts. Through Landscape Unlimited, you can consult landscapers Yuyung LaO, Oliver Ang, Jerome de Jesus and Francis Gener.

• Consider the area. Plot the design directly on the space allotted for the garden and measure the spaces accurately so you will know the exact quantities of materials you will need like white pebbles, decorative stones and garden soil. Remember, you won't be able to return excess materials.

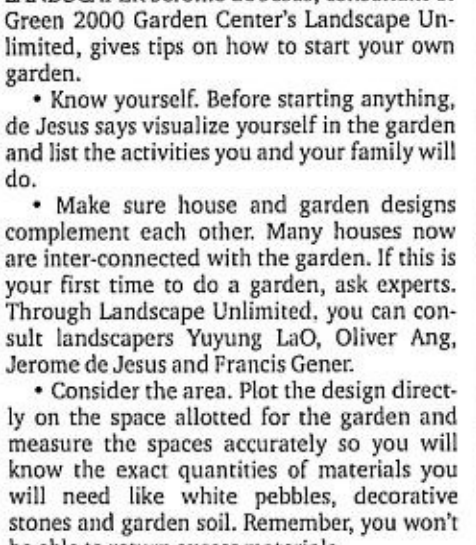
• Canvass prices. Based on the garden concept you have, make a list of the materials needed then canvass around for prices and supplies of materials.

De Jesus will give a lecture-demonstration on "Creating a Lifestyle Garden" 2-5 p.m., March 13, at Landscape Unlimited. He will also demonstrate fountain making and proper arrangement of fruits and vegetables as centerpieces for garden parties.

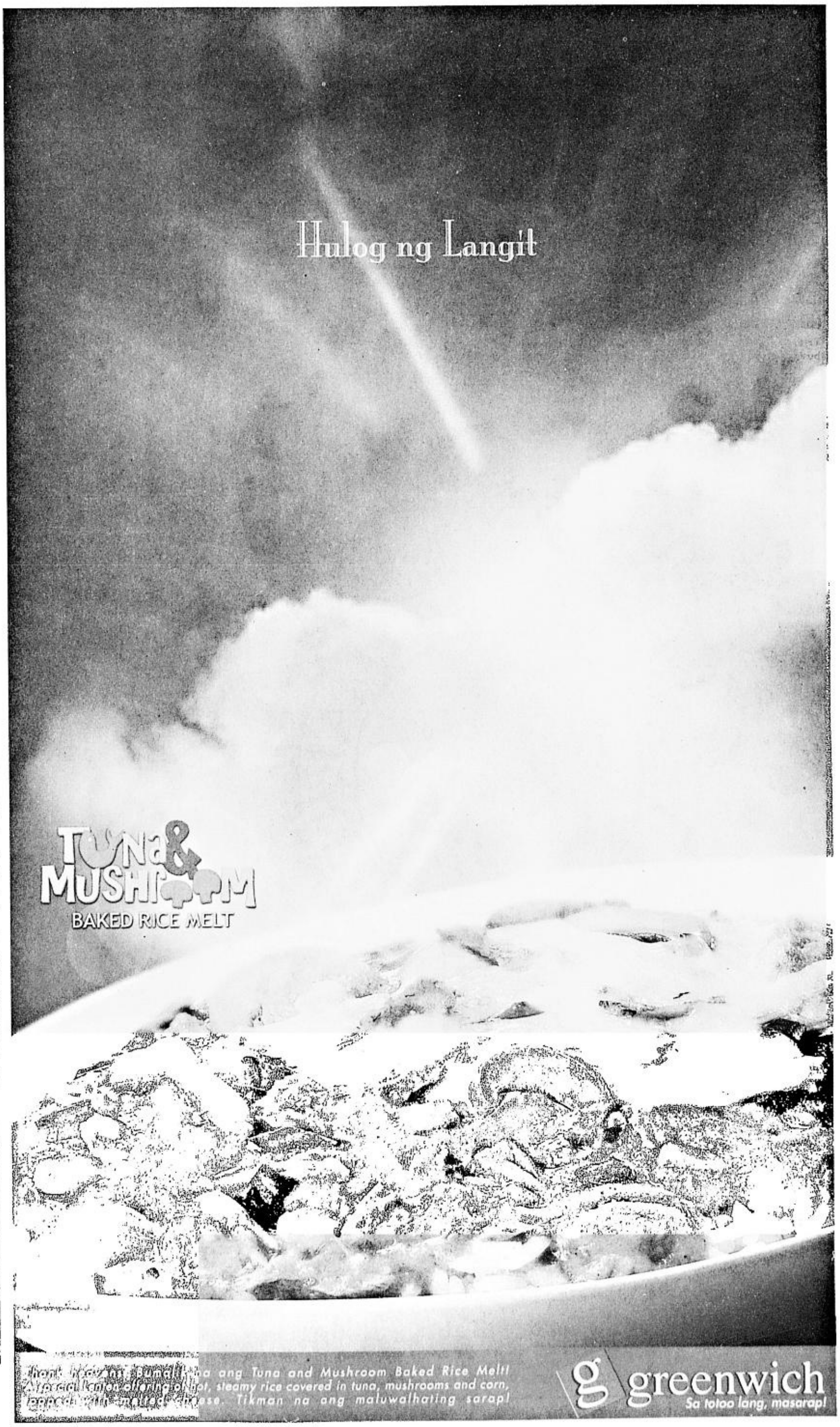
Lecture fee is P200 for Green 2000 Garden Center members only.

Green 2000 Garden Center's Landscape Unlimited is a complete store for landscaping products, garden designs, services and information at Manila Seedling Bank Environment Center, Edsa cor. Quezon Ave., Quezon City. It showcases landscape designs and *koi* ponds, and offers landscaping needs — pots, seeds, soils, plants, gardening tools and equipment, stones in varying colors, rocks and boulders, tiles, garden accessories, furniture, lighting, portable greenhouses, trellis, and others.

Call 4342347 or 7321954.



PLANTS and various garden accessories complement each other in this landscape designed by Yuyung LaO for Landscape Unlimited.



The new SM SUPERMARKET Makati

A full line of shopping list essentials in a modern, spacious and customer-friendly setting

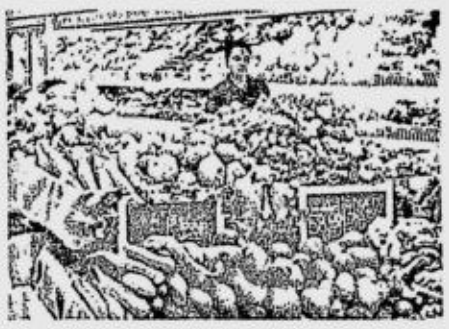
FRESH PICKS- A bumper harvest of produce and counters of shopping essentials line the new store from end to end.

BABY ESSENTIALS- The New Baby Nook carries a wide array of feeding basics, disposable diapers, bath and nursery items.

A bigger, better SM Supermarket Makati rises adjacent to its former location in the heart of Makati's dynamic Ayala Center.

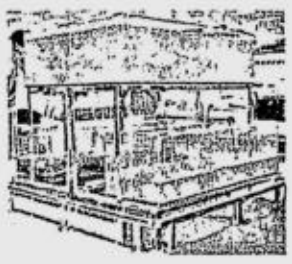
Committed to offering shoppers quality, variety and savings every day, SM Supermarket Makati carries a wide selection of farm fresh produce, fresh catch seafood, choice cut meats and poultry and freshly baked goods.

FRESH FROM THE FIELDS



The **Produce Section** proudly displays a harvest of locally-grown and imported fruits and vegetables, potted, and root crops. A special area carries organic products and healthy choices for discriminating shoppers.

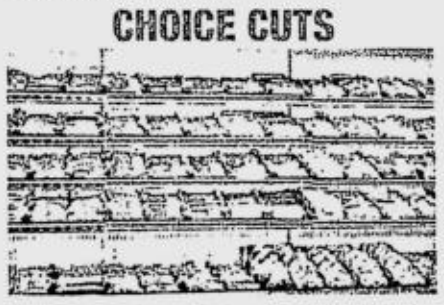
BOUNTIES FROM THE SEA



The **Seafood Section** is laden with a fisherman's dream catch. Besides an array of fish, crabs, shrimps and other marine edibles bedded on crushed ice, **The Aquarium** holds tempting choices for those who prefer to catch (point, really) their seafood "live".

Frozen imported delicacies from the sea includes Norweigan salmon, sea bass, codfish, mussels and scallops.

CHOICE CUTS



A wide variety of fresh meats, pork and poultry are available for the choosing. Premium cuts as well as value packs are tagged at best buy prices. U.S. imported items include angus beef, rib-eye and strip loin steaks and lamb from Australia.

U.S. IMPORTED ITEMS

Imported frozen items include waffles, pancakes, bagels, mozarella sticks, big-sized burger patties, corndogs, hot pockets, guacamole, cakes and desserts such as oreo and chocolate mousse cakes, whole strawberries, mixed fruits, mixed berries and ready-to-eat mexican preparations.

SOLUTION CENTER

An impressive collection of personal care products line the shelves of the health & beauty **Solution Center.**

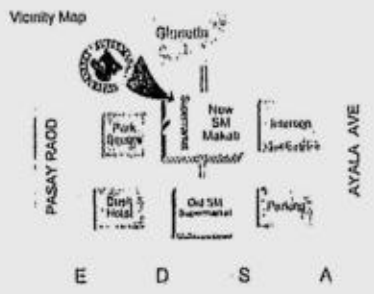
VALUE-ADDED SERVICES

SM Supermarket staffers go beyond the weighing, packaging, pricing and carting of the customer's purchases.

Upon request, extra services like pineapple peeling, de-husking of fresh buko, and the cleaning of seafood are made available to customers by SM Supermarket's knowledgeable and friendly staff.

DAILY DVD BLOWOUT RAFFLE

Now thru March 31, SM Supermarket will be giving away TEN (10) DVDs everyday. A customer with a P500 single receipt purchase of groceries is entitled to ONE (1) raffle coupon. SM Advantage Cardholders earn ONE (1) EXTRA coupon.



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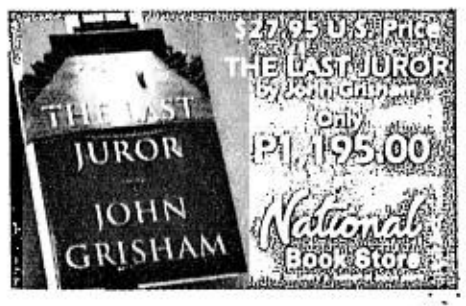

Lovelier the second time around

STORY ON PAGE F3

PHILIPPE Charriol with Coralie, his daughter and heir apparent to the Charriol empire, on their way to her Megeve, France, wedding to New York investment banker Dennis Paul in July last year.

Thank you!

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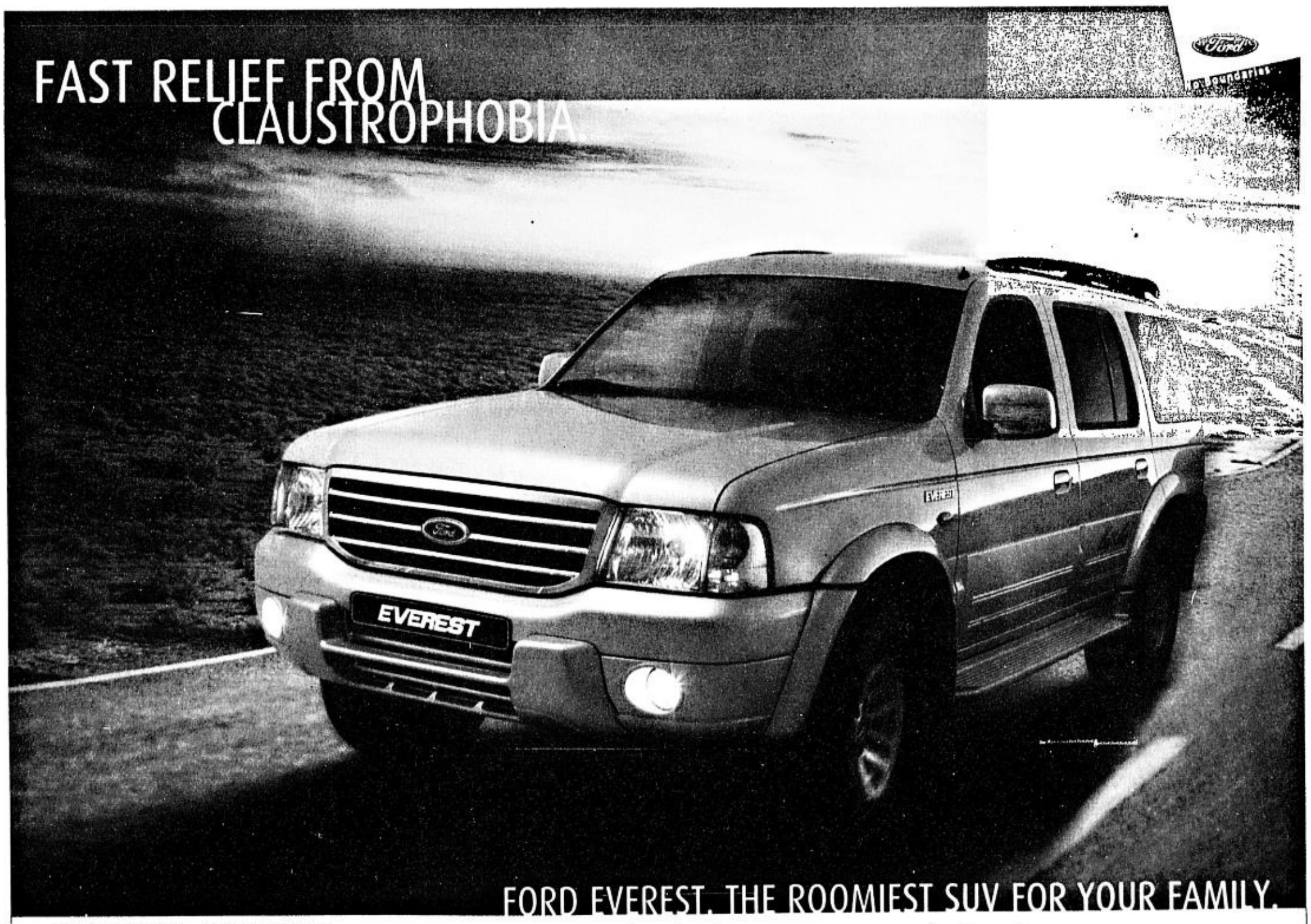

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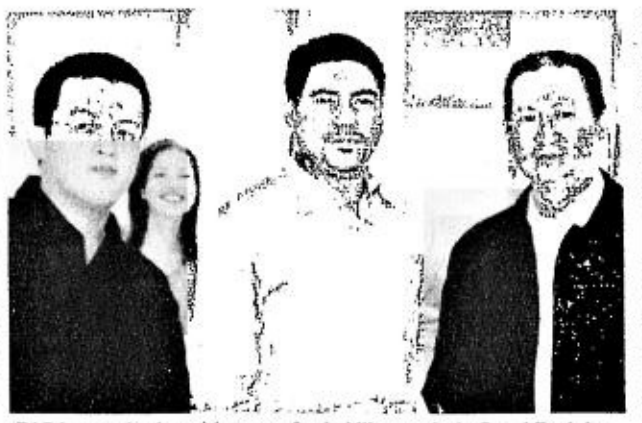
THE ITALIAN jet-setting connection. Giuseppe Roviaro of Gruppo Ceramiche Richetti, Rafael Castellanos of Mondo Stone and LSI marketing manager Lani Hernandez



BIG boys who love big toys. Andy Hilvano, Luis Casal Freight and architect Juco Hernandez

TOP BRASS. Boy Batac, LMGI EVP Dinggay Espiritu and Pilar Batac

Rendezvous in Iloilo

SCHWEINFURT, Germany-based engineer Robert Martinez won the impromptu Bodyshots contest at Iloilo's Vega Bar.

LADIES' MAN. Tall looker Carlo Andrada

POWER babe Candy Doronila, mega PR manager of Vega

CULINARY whiz and Amigo Hotel First Lady Maridel Uygongco

DANCING queen. Lovely Susan Wang at Café del Prado

SWINGING DUDES. The good-looking triumvirate of Paul Te, Arthur Solinap and Alfonso Solinap having a blast at Vega

APRES the Iloilo Queen 2004 Pageant, top party organizer **Nonoy Ybiernes**, Panay News style and society editor **John Castigador** and *moi* headed to the newly renovated Café del Prado of the elegant Hotel del Rio for after-dinner cocktails.

Joining us were hotel owners **Manolet** and **Millie Loring**, general manager **Jessie Ledesma**, F&B manager **Arlette Loring**, ultra-hip **Engel Loring**, stylish **Ging Uygongco** and businesswoman **Antonia Go**.

Good-looking brothers **Tata** and **Cedric Loring** hosted a small get-together for me and a few friends at Club Plazo, the swinging party place at Hotel del Rio, where *moi* found the vegetable pizza nutritious and yummy.

Joining us were businessman **Arne Hechanova**, SM City marketing head **Joanne Marie Combong**, Iloilo fashion prince **Eric de los Santos**, Engel Loring and good-looking **Paul Tinsay**. They all grooved to DJ **Gus Quisumbing**'s favorite '80s vintage tunes. As in Cosmo Manille, where the last stop is Venezia, in Iloilo, the place for a last stop is another sizzling V-place—the Vega. It recently underwent renovation and will reopen on March 11.

The place was packed—body to body, derriere to derriere—of the good, the bad and the beautiful, *palanggas*!

Screams and howls greeted the bare-chested hunk who was the winner in the Bodyshots contest being held at the bar.

Making sure we had fun was well-liked Vega owner **Elmer Dado**, top DJs **Eryk Gella** and **Jayvee Villaroz** and the PR team of **Arvin Villaroel, Macoy Quilantang** and headturner **Candy Doronilla**.

The following day, the Robinsons Place Iloilo manager, adorable **Ditas L. Taleon**, hosted a lunch for me at the excellent Citrus Bar and Resto of the Sarabia Manor Hotel and Convention Center. She was with the mall's promotions consultant, the fun **Don Protasio**.

Digging into the resto's sumptuous global cuisine were vivacious socialite **Linda Hoblitzel**, mother of spitfire **Cynthia Patag**, and award-winning interior designer **Edgar Lopez-Suelo**. Citrus owner and woman of style **Pauline Gorriceta-Banusing** and her equally stylish mom, **Sandra Sarabia-Gomez**, president of the hotel, were also there entertaining some chi-chi friends from Davao.

I then took a short tour of Iloilo with **Nonoy Y.** and the super nice **Rommel Naces**, our efficient guide and chauffeur during my Iloilo visit. The tour was great thanks to businessman **Judgee Pena** and my vivacious *palangga*, **Sarah Pena**; they are a kind and amiable couple.

By then, Iloilo was pulsating with the hot beats of the Dinagyang drums. Several "tribes" danced on the main thoroughfares. Meanwhile, a foodfest was being set up on Delgado and Arroyo streets.

By sundown, the foodfest was in full blast. It seemed that the entire city was enjoying the delectable dishes the different booths were offering along the streets. Nonoy Y., John C. and *moi* couldn't have enough of the to-die-for Pho, Vietnamese noodles with shredded chicken and a secret sauce topping, at the super in-demand Amigo Hotel Iloilo booth.

Raving over the dish, I quickly asked Amigo's culinary whiz and first lady, **Maridel Padilla-Uygongco**, for the recipe, which she readily gave me, thank goodness.

Ah, *palanggas*, there is something about Iloilo that will make you come back again and again. And at the Amigo Hotel, which is my home away from home, you will find excellent service and superb food. It is also conveniently located at the center of town. Check it out, *palanggas*, you can't go wrong.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

New ceramic showroom

It was one of those lazy late afternoons, *palanggas*, when Liberty Marble and Granite Inc. celebrated the soft opening of the state-of-the-art showroom of its newest baby, Liberty Stile Inc. at Reposo Street in Bel-Air, Makati.

The blessing was officiated by Fr. **Joseph Mary Bacay**.

As the guests started to breeze in, *palanggas*, they were welcomed by the hotshot top management team of the Liberty Group composed of **Tom P. Batac**, chair; **Boy Batac**, president; **Dinggay Espiritu**, EVP; **Rodel Cruz**, VP for operations; **Lani Hernandez**, marketing manager; and **Reah Pangilinan**, the top finance manager.

The hip, modern showroom was designed by talented architect **Gil Coscolluela**, who sets the trend in ceramic tile. The store promotes natural stone and bath accessories. "It is the first of its kind in the metropolis," explained Dinggay Espiritu.

Super special guests from Europe jetted into town just for this occasion, dahlings. They included the vibrant **Giuseppe Roviaro** of Richetti Italy, **Alfonso Leonessa** of Agape Italy and **Marco Maleti**.

A neoclassic ensemble played during dinner, as wine poured all night long. The guests loved the scrumptious dinner provided by Cabalen.

Surely to become Liberty Stile's followers are **Andrea Gimenez, Andy Ibarra, Rafael Castellanos, Gary** and Gil **Coscolluela, Louie Dabao, Marivic Fontana, Laya Bengson, Luigi Antonio**, architect **Jose Juco** and **Rene Garcia**.

The spacious, gorgeous showroom featured elegant Italian and Portuguese ceramic tiles; ultra-chic and sleek bath accessories, designed by Agape of Italy, no less, and the widest array of natural stones, including, would you believe, onyx and alabaster. Now, *palanggas*, if that ain't high style living, I don't know what is, *n'es cest pas*, as in, *di bala*?

Intramuros shebang

Manila's newest, hot-hot tourist attraction, the Rizal Light and Sound Museum, has opened in the heart of Intramuros. It has already attracted such visiting foreign dignitaries as President **Nursultan Nazarbayev** of Kazakhstan; Foreign Minister **Morshed Khan** of Bangladesh; Tourism Minister **Dato Paduka Abdul Kadir bin Haji Sheikh Fadzir** of Malaysia; and US Ambassador **Francis Ricciardone**. Now, how's that for name-dropping, *palanggas*?

No less than President **Macapagal Arroyo** inaugurated this must-see state-of-the-art museum, which is the brainchild of the unstoppable and indefatigable Mr. Wow Philippines himself, former tourism secretary **Dick Gordon**, who keeps us Filipinos going rah-rah, even during difficult and depressing times.

You'll be thrilled watching the diorama in what used to be the Beaterio de la Compania de Jesus. The diorama covers pre-history, the Spanish conquest and colonization, the nationalist movement, plus other exciting tableaus, dahlings.

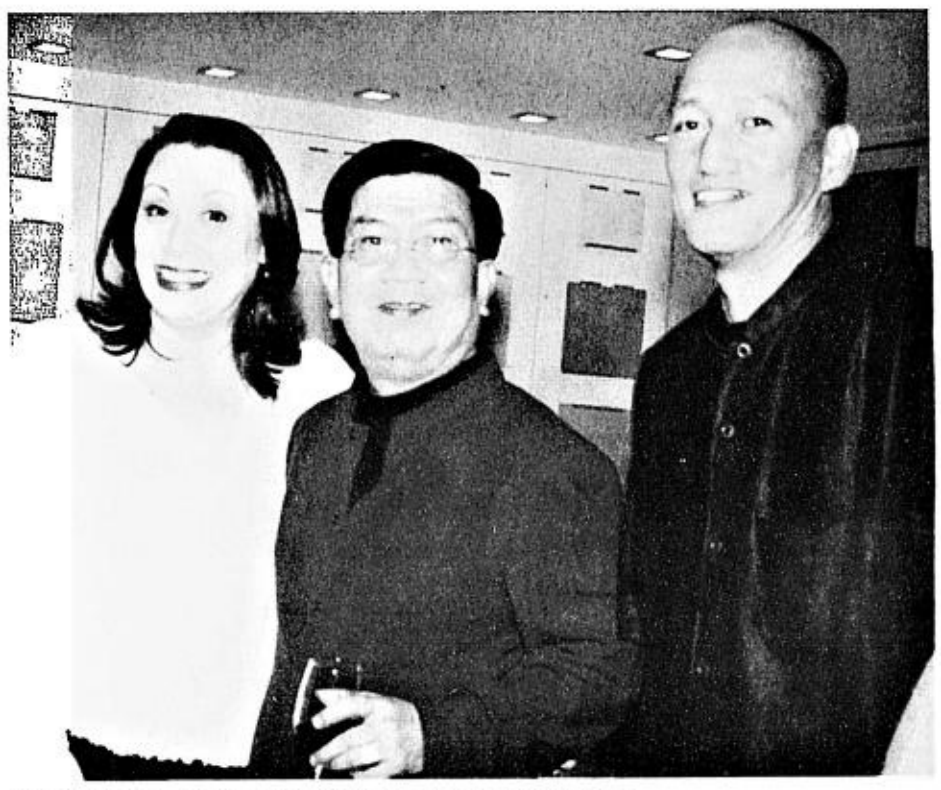
The fabulous opening was officiated by San Agustin Church's Fr. **Pedro Gallende, OSA**, and emceed by top international equestrienne, **Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski**. It was marked by a ceremonial breaking of the walls by President Macapagal and Gordon; they gamely smashed a replica of the Intramuros wall.

On hand to witness the event were Doña **Amelia Gordon**, recipient of this year's prestigious Pearl S. Buck Foundation Award; dynamic Olongapo Mayor **Kate G.** with her gang of volunteer pals; and **Mano Morales**, who did wonders in enhancing the beauty of Intramuros by putting up period-inspired street lights.

Naturellement, tourism officials were in full attendance. We zoomed in on the posse of royalette and brilliant achiever **Carissa Coscolluela**, Assistant Secretary **Ferdie Hernandez**, Undersecretary **Armand Arreza**, who was with **Paz Arreza**, and other movers and shakers, *palanggas*.

***

Hey, *palanggas*, make sure you check out "Oh Yes, Johnny's Back," tomorrow on RPN-9 at 11 p.m. If you are at home, enjoy and love it. If you're partying, have it taped. It's all about our trip to beautiful Vigan. You'll love it, promise.



HOTSHOTS. Lani Aquino, Tom Batac and architect Rodel Cruz

AT the CAFE del Prado of Hotel del Rio: (seated) MANOLET and Millie Loring with Jessie Ledesma; (standing) Engel Loring, Ging Uyngengco, Arlette Deles and Antonia Go

ENGEL Loring with Arne Hechanova, Nonoy Ybiernas, *moi* and Cedric Loring at Club Plazo

PARTY time at Vega Bar. Nonoy Y., Peter Jaena, DJ Jayvee Villaroz and Michelle San Agustin

JOHN Castigador's high school gangmates, businessmen Alan Padlan and Dodong Lim of the famous Tibiao Bakery, at Café del Prado

PRESIDENT Macapagal Arroyo and former Tourism Secretary Dick Gordon visit the Rizal Light and Sound Museum in Intramuros.

LUNCH at Citrus Bar and Resto: Linda Hoblitzel, (seated) vivacious mother of actress and singer Cynthia Patag, and Nonoy Y; (back row) Edgar Suelo and *moi* with our hosts Ditas Taleon and Pauline Banusing.

Lovelier the second time around

PARIS bag from the Charriol Escapade Collection

Luxury brand master Philippe Charriol is back to bask again in the city where his name is most recognized

By Cheche V. Moral

PHILIPPE Charriol likes Manila so much that he picked Manila again as the venue last week of the agency conference of his luxurious eponymous brand.

If in 2002 he brought with him only agents from Asia, this time he brought 32 agents from all over the world.

"More than any other country, Charriol is most recognized in the Philippines," the Frenchman said. "Of course, that doesn't necessarily translate into sales," he added with a guffaw.

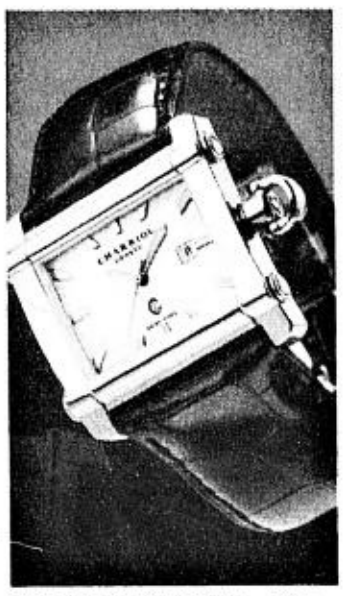
He was looking quite relaxed and bohemian in pale linen pants and a bright coral shirt, its sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He had slumped on the couch, an alligator-mule-shod foot casually propped on the metal base of the coffee table. There was nary a trace of the stereotypical stiff-and-staid businessmen of his stature.

It was his fourth day in Manila, and the one-on-one interviews with the local media in a suite at the Makati Shangri-La that afternoon were sort of his break from his hectic schedule. (The agents had just left on a city tour.)

He likes to go around the region, he said. In fact, he likes to travel all over to check on his 48 boutiques worldwide, undeterred by the situation in Iraq or the bird-flu and SARS scares in Asia. "Of course, my business was badly affected by SARS," Charriol conceded. "But all these news about war, they're [exaggerated]!"

He is always optimistic, this man. "That's always been my attitude... We're on another phase of our expansion here," he said of his 21-year-old jewelry and leathergoods brand. Late last year, he opened his second boutique in Greenbelt 4, the mall's ultra-luxe wing. The first opened at Power Plant Mall in 2001; Charriol corners are in Rustan's Makati and Rustan's Tower.

Charriol's daughter, Coralie, the company's vice president and progenitor of the brand's leathergoods line, was supposed to join her father on this trip, but had a ski accident in Aspen. "She had an operation yesterday," he said, ruefully running his fingers through his hair.


MEANT TO BE WORN—AND STAND OUT. The Actor watch has a thespian's chameleon-like quality.

STERLING and steel bangle and choker from the Celtic Croisillon Collection

Heir apparent

He went on to talk fondly about Coralie, whom he is rearing to take over the family business someday. Charriol's son, Alexandre, is an artist who lives in New York. "Coralie is a lot like me [in interests and temperament]," he said. "My son is more like his mom. They're more laidback."

On Coralie's wedding to a New York investment banker last year, the Charriols orchestrated a week-long celebration for their elite friends in an exclusive retreat in Megeve, France.

The heart of the Charriol business may be the men's watches. But since 80 percent of its market are women, the brand needs feminine flair. Coralie provides that, plus a certain youth appeal.

Talented and very attractive, Coralie is also the face that represents the Charriol brand, gracing catalogs and campaign posters. Her father focuses on the creative and business aspects of Charriol; but leathergoods are Coralie's domain.

"We need the younger ones," said the proud father. "We can't keep doing things the way we do. They always have something new to say, some new ideas."

Charriol is keeping close watch of Qatar these days, which he said is an exciting market. Unlike in other countries where market share of women is generally bigger, in Qatar 70 percent of Charriol clients are male. Russia is also steadily picking up.

Manila may not be a huge market for Charriol, but the man behind it remains hopeful. On this trip, he pushed the men's Actor watch, a fashionably large watch with an unconventional horizontal design and interchangeable straps that give it a thespian's chameleon-like quality. "You don't buy a Charriol for its movement," he said. "Charriol watches are designed to be worn. They aren't kept in a safe as collector's items."

For women, the brand's classic Celtic cable design is manifested in a black sterling and steel collection called Black Desire. Thickly stacked, the Celtic Croisillon Collection takes inspiration from the African Masai tribe.

Largely classic and traditional in design and character, Charriol has also introduced some bright colors not only in its bags but also in its jewelry and watches. But 70-80 percent of its market, said Charriol, still go for blacks and neutrals. "It's good to give them a choice," he smiled.

Charriol is a small but highly successful independent corporation not comparable in size to other luxury brands. Its founder headed Les Must de Cartier Far East and Les Must de Cartier USA before he set out on his own in 1983. He learned through Cartier about luxury brands, the man said, "but everything else, I learned on my own... I like it this way. I'm head of the company, and I'm still on top of things."

E-mail the author at cmoral@inquirer.com.ph

CORALIE wears the Black Desire sterling and steel jewelry collection and St. Tropez By Night watch.

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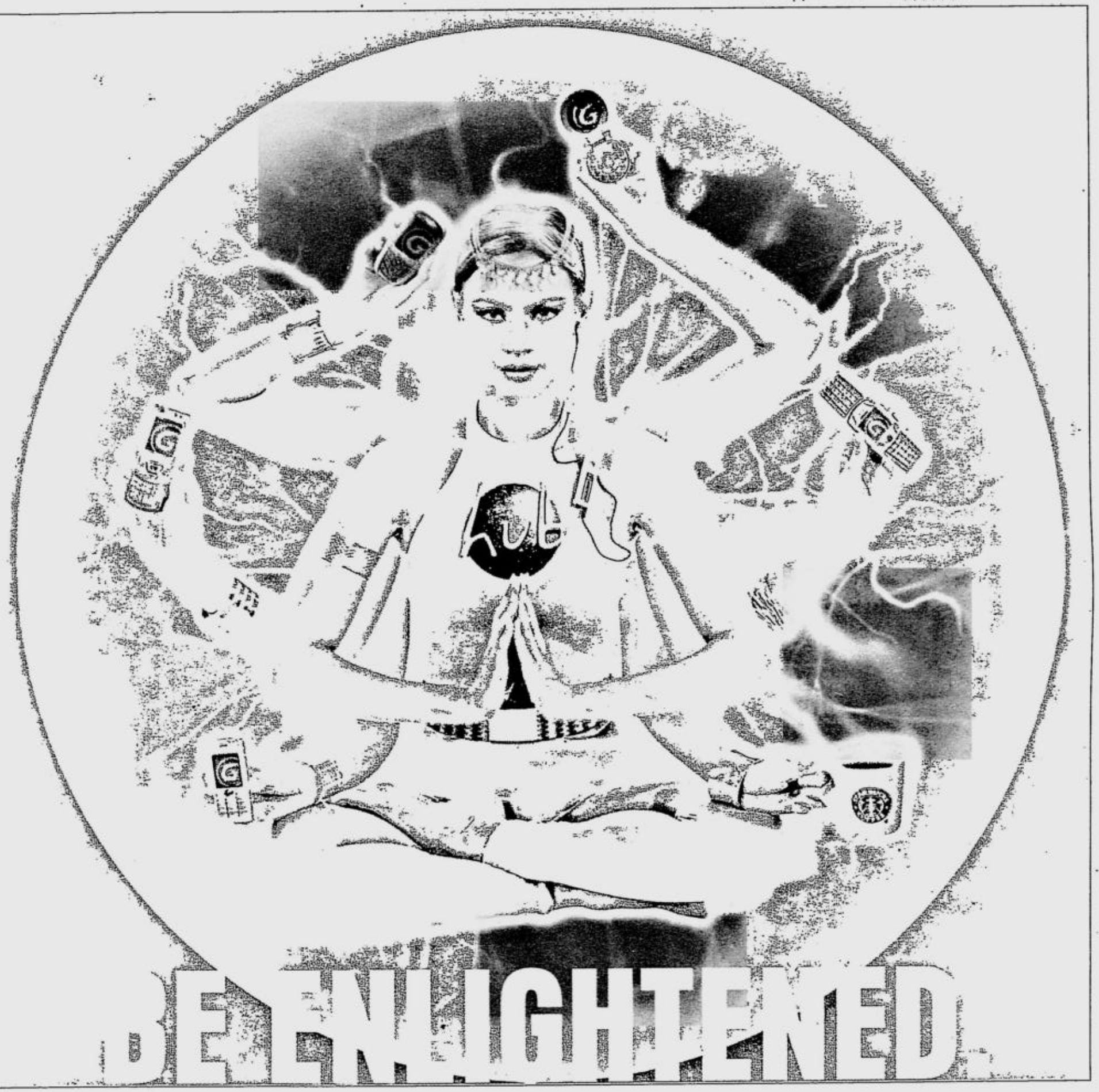

GOINGS ON

Scholarships for Pinoy high school graduates

The United World Colleges (UWC) Philippine Alumni Network, in partnership with the Ayala Foundation, Inc., announces the availability of scholarships for 2004-2006. Filipino high school graduating students are invited to a symposium on the UWC movement 1:30-4:30 p.m., March 6, Ayala Foundation, Inc. office, 10/F Bank of the Philippine Islands main building, Paseo de Roxas cor. Ayala Ave., Makati City. Additional information is also available at the UWC Philippines site www.ph.uwc.org. Call 5269338/ 5269332/ 5269490, e-mail uwcphilippines@yahoo.com or infol@ph.uwc.org or fax 4332626.

FAIR. Sta. Lucia East Department Store holds the 3rd Baby Fair until March 30. The event offers big discounts on infants' apparel, toys and accessories. If your baby is 6-18 months old, capture his winning shot and register in Baby Shots 2004 at the store's customer service. Enlist in the Baby Gift registry and avail of privileges and special discounts.

CONCERT. Grammy Award-winning Christian music group 4Him will perform today until March 7 at the Cathedral of Praise along Tait Avenue, Ermita. Admission is free.

MEETING. John Robert Powers Manila will host the annual meeting of franchisees from Asia and the USA on March 7-9 at the JRP School in Makati.

CONCERT. Paco Park Presents the Abelardo Guitar Quartet tonight at 6. Admission is free. Call 5268163/3027374.

WORKSHOP. Filipinas Heritage Library presents "The Eye of Writing: Poetry Workshop for Beginners" on March 11 and 18, 6-8 p.m. Workshop facilitator is Paolo Manalo, literary editor of the Philippines Free Press. Call 8921801.

CONCERT. Concert at the Park features the Awit Children's Chamber Orchestra on March 7, 6 p.m. Admission is free.

SEMINAR. The Philippine Normal University Department of Library and Information Science is conducting a seminar-workshop until March 6 at the 4/F Audiovisual Theater Library building. Topics include "Records Management" and "Organization of Library Resources." Call 3027717 or 0920-2661028.

WORKSHOP. Life Transformation Institute will hold "The Wholeness in the Workplace" workshop-series on March 6, 13 and 20, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Bahay Kalinaw, UP Diliman, QC. Call 4156529/ 7964 or 0919-3888870.

CONTEST. Sing Young, a songwriting contest dedicated to the youth, has extended its deadline to March 10. The contest is on March 29 Entries must be sent to the IABC Secretariat, Unit 407, Asian Mansion I, 109 De La Rosa St., Legazpi Village, Makati. Call 8929592/ 8455380